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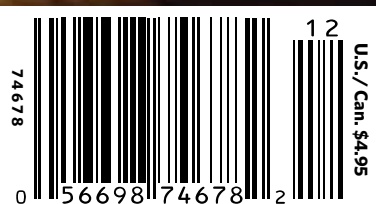
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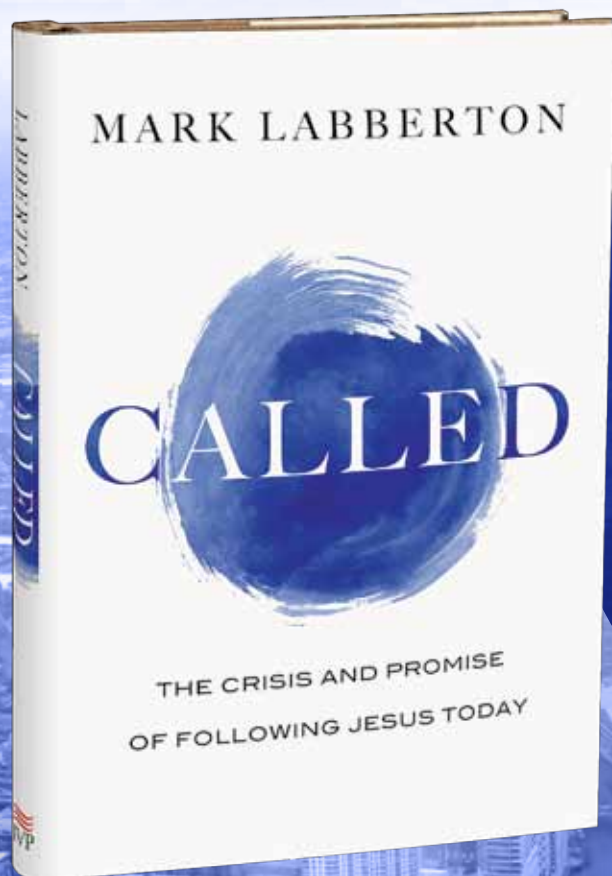
On being a
Muslim parent
in the age of ISIS

Advent: Season
of disruption
and hope

The Man Who Wrote King's Most Dangerous Speech

Vincent Harding
and the movement
that changed
America.





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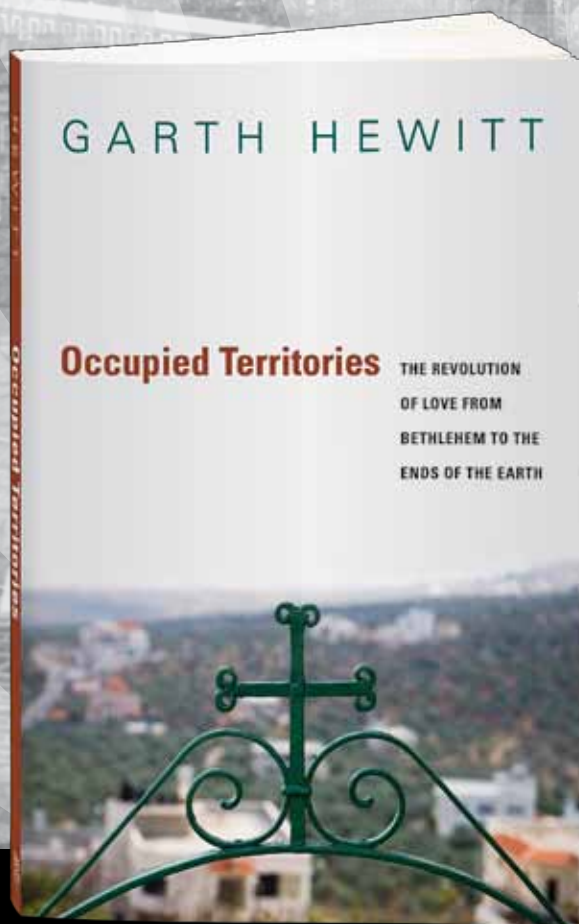
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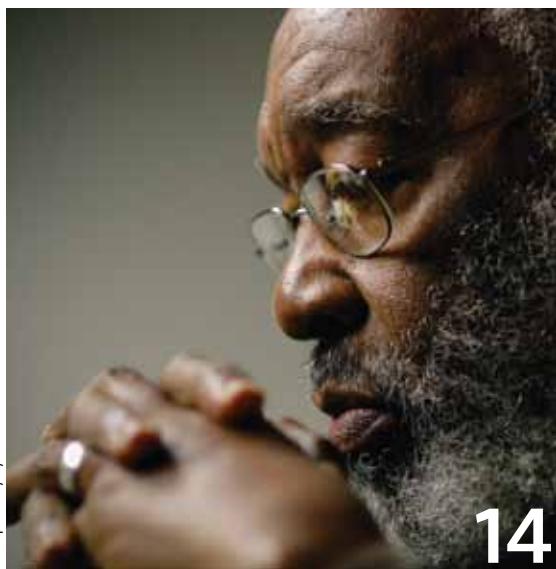
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14



24



28

sojourners

contents

DECEMBER 2014 Vol. 43 | No. 11

COVER

- 14 The Man Who Wrote King's Most Dangerous Speech**
Vincent Harding, a pillar of the Southern freedom movement, continues to inspire a new generation.
by Joanna Shenk

FEATURES

- 18 Compassion in the Stacks**
The San Francisco Public Library does more than welcome its homeless patrons.
by Brittany Shoot
- 24 Bonds of Brotherhood**
How an act of hatred brought together unlikely allies in the struggle for peace.
by Andrew Dunn-Bauman
- 28 Left Behind**
Faith and advocacy groups can help the long-term unemployed—but will it be enough in a shifting economy?
by John A. Zukowski

CULTURE WATCH

- 38 Parker Millsap's "Truck Stop Gospel"**
Reviews: *A Path Appears*; *Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest*; *I Beg to Differ*
- 40 Eyes & Ears**, by Danny Duncan Collum
- 41 On Film**, by Gareth Higgins

COMMENTARY

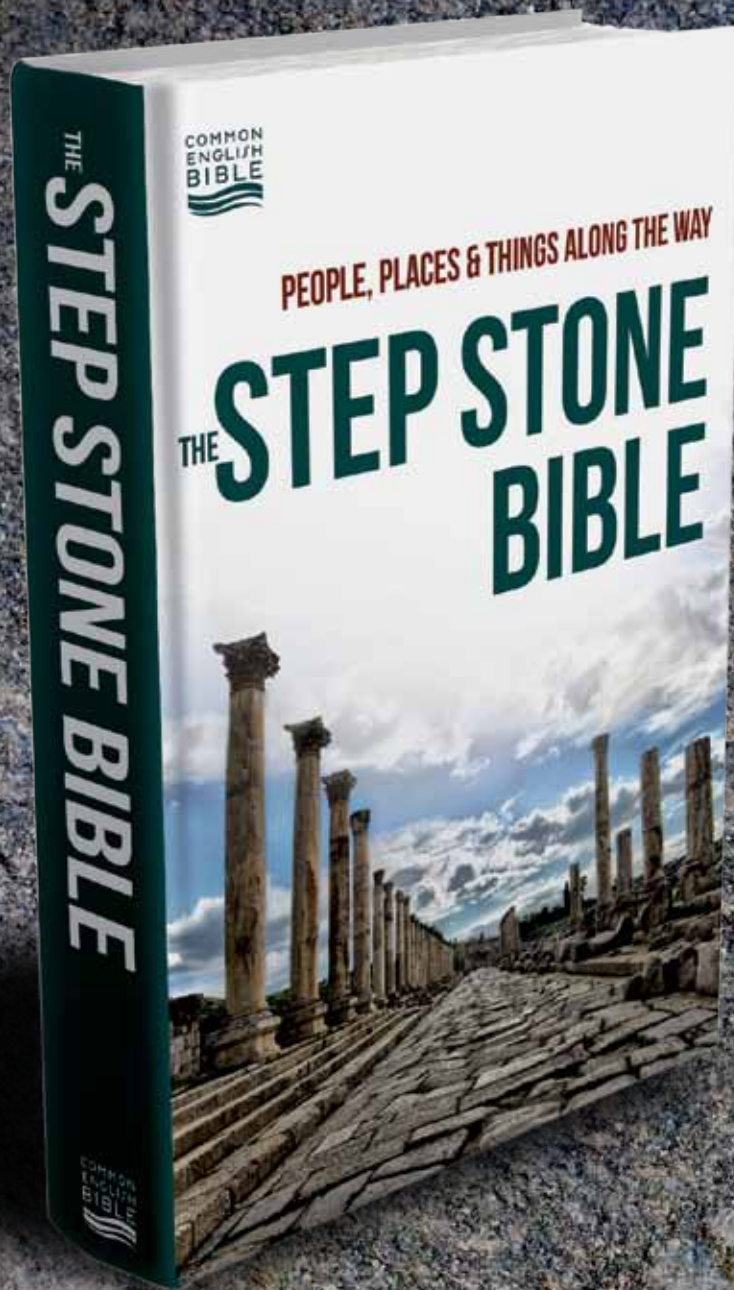
- 8 Advent and disruption**
- 9 How to beat Ebola**
- 10 Demilitarizing police**

COLUMNS

- 7 Hearts & Minds**
by Jim Wallis
- 12 Bridges**
by Eboo Patel
- 50 H'rumphs**
by Ed Spivey Jr.

DEPARTMENTS

- 5 Letters**
- 36 Poetry**
- 48 Living the Word**
by Reta Halteman Finger



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IN OUR ADVENT and Christmas stories, angels are messengers of invitation and freedom, pointing us toward liberation and life and off the path of destruction.

In this issue, we look at the life of another powerful messenger, Vincent Harding. He and his wife Rosemarie first came to Sojourners in the 1980s, offering us wisdom drawn from their mentors Howard and Sue Bailey Thurman, Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Martin Luther King Jr. In 1998, Vincent delivered Sojourners' first Spirituality Lecture at Howard University's Rankin Chapel where Howard Thurman once served as dean.

Vincent passed away in May, but he

lived long enough to comment powerfully on the election of the first African-American president and to prophetically call him out when he strayed from the dream of "a more perfect union." Joanna Shenk, a Mennonite pastor whom Vincent counted as a friend, writes on the Hardings' life and witness.

Andrew Dunn-Bauman offers a transformative story from Oak Creek, Wisc., where Sikhs and a former racist skinhead have come together in a peacemaking project in the aftermath of the 2012 temple massacre. And former *Sojourners* Culture Watch editor Molly Marsh returns to our pages



with analysis of the Ebola crisis in Liberia—and a review of a new book on smart giving.

Incarnation means that it's on us now to be the hands and feet and voices of Christ, just as Vincent and Rosemarie were. "Surrounded as we are by a host

of ancestors who have gone before us—including our ancestor Jesus," Vincent wrote, "we will continue to sing. We will continue to build. ... For we believe with Langston [Hughes] that we were not meant to be broken-winged birds ... we were meant to rise up on wings like eagles. ... Let's fly, children. Let's fly!" ■

Letters

NO RICH SCHOOL LEFT BEHIND

I loved the way Bob Smietana's "Agents of Grit and Grace" dovetailed with Danny Duncan Collum's "A Teachable Moment" (September-October 2014). In reading Smietana's story about the teachers in the Memphis Teacher Residency who are working so hard to serve the children of Memphis, I was concerned that MTR leaders seemed to accept test scores as a measure of school quality. A few pages later, Collum described the dangers of the emerging education-industrial complex. Test scores are one of the ways that this complex manipulates our society into destroying our public schools.

In reality, test scores are more closely related to parent income levels than to any other factor. Our children are suffering because our public schools are underfunded. The 99 percent of us who are not wealthy do not have sufficient funds to support the education of our children. We must improve school funding by requiring corporations and wealthy individuals to pay their fair share. The uber-wealthy have avoided this responsibility by having the media focus on test scores rather than the needs of the children. This ploy feeds and supports the education-industrial complex.

Anita Johnson
Walnut Creek, California

"Our children are suffering because our public schools are underfunded."

CHRISTIAN INCOME GAP?

I appreciated Julie Polter's piece "The Rich Get Richer" (August 2014) on the growing wage inequality between the CEOs of major corporations and their average workers. I recommend a follow-up piece on wage disparity trends in faith-based institutions and nonprofits. I've noted a predictable pattern of Christian-based organizations starting out demonstrating the kind of passion that has its leadership making great financial sacrifices in order to help accomplish its mission. As the organization grows and becomes more conventional and institutionalized, CEO wages rise to six digits and beyond while entry-level staff are paid standard low wages. What kind of Jesus-based countercultural example should we be setting in this area?

Harvey Yoder
Harrisonburg, Virginia

FRUIT TREE CASUALTIES

Ryan Rodrick Beiler's photo ("Enemy Trees?" August 2014) dramatically captures

the destruction of more than 1,500 mature fruit trees and grapevines bulldozed by the Israeli military. The deed itself and the meaning it symbolizes are heartbreaking!

I'm reminded of a passage from Deuteronomy 20:19 that provides instructions on how to conduct war: "If you besiege a town for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them. Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down. Are trees in the field human beings that they should come under siege from you?" The symbolism of peace and hope for the future is captured by the story of the dove returning to Noah with an olive leaf. This and more has been destroyed by this dastardly act!

Rev. Bernard Kern
North Richland Hills, Texas

Thumbs up! (Or down.) Write to letters@sojo.net or Letters, *Sojourners*, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.



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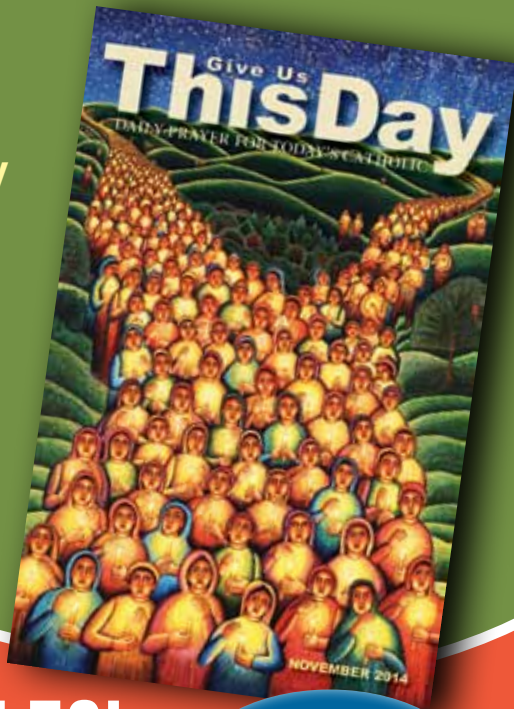
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Sojourners magazine (ISSN 0364-2097) is published monthly, except September-October is combined, at 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Canadian Publications Sales Agreement #257494. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sojourners, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

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BY JIM WALLIS

How to Overcome Evil



LIKE MUCH OF the world, I've been thinking quite a bit about ISIS over the past few months. I've been horrified by the accounts of the so-called Islamic State's barbarism, and I lament their perversion of one of the world's great religions.

Most of all, I'm outraged at their disregard for human life—at their wanton killing of Shia Muslims, Christians, Yazidis, and anyone else who doesn't share their radical vision. Pope Francis has said that it's legitimate to act to protect innocent lives in this case, and I don't disagree with him.

Yet I believe that Jesus calls us to be peacemakers, which requires us to think beyond short-term military solutions and address the systemic issues that breed crises like this one. And I strongly believe that to have

are not evil, because it is and they are. But we do need to acknowledge that the turmoil that has enveloped Iraq since the U.S. invasion in 2003 created a fertile environment for a group like ISIS to win supporters to its cause. Ultimately, we cannot undermine or defeat a group that we do not properly understand. Only when we change the underlying conditions that allow ISIS to attract recruits will it be possible for us to defeat it in the long term.

To that end, we need to confess that our legacy of colonialism and dependence on fossil fuels has much to do with the current state of the Middle East. Western colonial powers drew national boundaries in the region based on their own interests, with little regard for regional history or cultural identities. At the same time, we have subverted people's rights to self-determination by supporting corrupt and repressive regimes throughout the region and valued our access to oil above all other considerations. U.S. military bases in the Middle East make it difficult for citizens of these countries not to see us as an imperial power much like the ancient Romans.

And we must also confess that our too-uncritical support of Israel, both politically and militarily, contributes significantly to regional instability. I want to be clear: I affirm Israel's right to exist in peace and safety alongside its neighbors. But we also need to be clear that the Israeli government's repressive treatment of and disproportionate use of force against Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is a major factor behind anti-American sentiment in the region. So long as we refuse to criticize this behavior, and continue to supply the military hardware that makes it possible, terrorist

groups such as ISIS will continue to use U.S. policy as a powerful recruiting tool.

CONFESSION IN THESE matters is necessary, but not sufficient. In order to effect lasting change, we must also engage in repentance. True repentance means more than just being sorry. It means both admitting that the course you have been on is wrong and committing to begin walking in a new direction.

In the short term, we need to commit to fully understanding ISIS beyond what we glean from its own propaganda. A clear understanding of why militants are joining ISIS will best enable us to degrade their ability to attract additional recruits.

In the long term, the challenge of defeating ISIS and groups like it necessitates that we change our own policies and behaviors that have contributed to where we find ourselves today. We should commit to a new energy future, free from the shackles of Middle Eastern oil. We should base our support for governments in the region on their respect for democracy and human rights. We should work to dismantle our empire of military bases in the region. And we should fully embrace a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, and be willing to openly speak truth to both sides regarding the many wrongs they continue to inflict on each other.

Truly being peacemakers in a world where such evil is being done by groups such as ISIS is never going to be easy, but it is our calling as followers of Christ. Therefore let us heed Paul's advice in Romans 12: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners.

We cannot undermine or defeat a group that we do not understand.

any moral authority in the current crisis, we must first confess the Western policies and attitudes that have contributed to where we find ourselves today—and then repent of those policies and attitudes.

The first thing we need to confess is a shallow and, at best, incomplete understanding of ISIS. Alireza Doostdar of the University of Chicago Divinity School wrote, "[We] seem to assume that ISIS ... has suddenly materialized out of the thin ether of an evil doctrine. But ISIS emerged from the fires of war, occupation, killing, torture, and disenfranchisement. It did not need to sell its doctrine to win recruits. It needed above all to prove itself effective against its foes."

That is not to say that ISIS' doctrine and the actions of its fighters

Jim West



Occupy Earth

In September, more than 350,000 people converged on New York City demanding substantive action by world leaders on climate change. Led by youth and other highly impacted communities, the People's Climate March included hundreds of rallies around the U.S. as well as in 162 countries, including Afghanistan, Nepal, and Indonesia. "Who can stop climate change?" asked Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu ahead of the Sept. 21 event. "We can. ... We have a responsibility to do so that began in the genesis of humanity, when God commanded the earliest human inhabitants of the Garden of Eden 'to till it and keep it.'"

By Rose Marie Berger

Season of Disruption

Advent is a time to answer the question, "Which side are you on?"

WHEN JOHANNES BRAHMS first played his *German Requiem* in Vienna in 1867, the audience was shocked. In fact, scholars report that some "hissed and booed and behaved quite boorishly."

This October, when the St. Louis Symphony performed the same piece along with German composer Detlev Glanert's arrangement of Brahms' *Four Preludes and Serious Songs*, it elicited a similar response.

Not to the work itself, but to what occurred during intermission.

As conductor Markus Stenz took the stage, two audience members began to sing. In strong, clear voices, they performed Florence Patton Reece's famous justice hymn: "Which side are you on, friend? Which side are you on?" Nearly a dozen more scattered throughout Powell Hall joined in. While the audience watched in stunned silence, a banner unfurled from the balcony with a silhouette of a man's face. It said: Requiem for Mike Brown 1996-2014.

As in Vienna, there were some boos from the audience and a few expletives—more disruption following the Aug. 9 shooting death of Michael Brown, an unarmed African-American teenager, by white police officer Darren Wilson. While the Vienna audience complained that Brahms' music was too religious for a secular setting, one St. Louis symphony-goer asked, "Is Powell Hall a proper venue for a protest?" And a Catholic priest challenged: "Instead of chanting 'Which side are you on?' further dividing the community, try singing 'How can we heal?'"

"A concert hall is a public place, and public protest is possible there," composer Glanert told *Sojourners*. "Perhaps [Brahms] would have quoted the Bible: 'Whoever hates his brother is a murderer ... no murderer has eternal life within him.'"

Like this performance, like the events in Ferguson, Mo., Advent is a season of disruption, a season of silences and unexpected

angelic choirs, one of prophetic demands and alarming wake-up calls. In the opening movement of his *Requiem*, Brahms draws on verses in our Advent cycle: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Psalm 126:5).

Advent scriptures make demands on us. The familiar opening of Isaiah 40—"Comfort, comfort, oh my people"—is an answer to Lamentations 1:17: "Zion stretches out her hands, but there is no one to comfort her." After more than 150 years of exile, God breaks God's silence through the voice of the prophet with an offer of comfort.

Zion stretches out her hands, imploring. In a brilliant essay on what she calls a "choreopolitics of freedom," dance professor Anusha Kedhar writes, "The 'hands up don't shoot' slogan implores the protester not only to stand in solidarity with Michael Brown by re-enacting his last movements, but also to *empathize* by embodying his final corporeal act of agency."

The great Advent of our God demands

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The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

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nothing less. Catholic theologian James Alison puts it this way: "The One who is coming will not preside over us, but will teach us to want peace from within, and to learn the habits that make it possible. The One who loves us will come as one we despise, and crucify: The definitive puncturing of our god-fantasies, and yet the Presence of one who is powerfully determined not to let us remain wedded to our self-destruction."

Back in St. Louis' Powell Hall, the demonstrators completed their performance in

By Molly Marsh

How to Beat Ebola

The only way to defeat the epidemic is to strengthen health-care systems.

CONSIDER A FATHER from rural Liberia who shows symptoms of Ebola. There are no health clinics in or near his village, so he and his family make the 10-hour trip to Liberia's capital, Monrovia, using public transportation, potentially infecting others at every stage of their journey.

They arrive at the city's public hospital, which is overflowing with patients because the facility is understaffed and under-resourced. Staff members don't have sufficient training or the tools to treat Ebola's symp-

about two minutes, and then furled their banners and exited to the percussive chant of "Black lives matter." Some in the orchestra clapped.

The conductor tapped the podium with his baton. Slowly and magnificently, Brahms' *Requiem* opened with pulsing bass and unfolding choral line from Matthew 5: "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted." ■

Rose Marie Berger is a Sojourners senior associate editor.

resourced. Doctors and nurses in full protective gear meet the ambulance, take the father to a hospital bed that is placed at some distance from others, and continue administering fluids. Because his community health worker spotted his symptoms early, and because high-quality care is close by, the father likely lives.

EBOLA HAS FLOURISHED because of the first scenario. The countries most affected by the virus are among the poorest in the world

Before the Ebola outbreak, Liberia had only 50 doctors in public-health facilities serving 4.3 million people.

toms, the space to isolate infected patients, or the appropriate equipment to protect themselves from danger. They can't cope with the sheer number of patients—those with the virus or with other illnesses—and the father likely dies.

What if, instead, the father is seen by a community health worker in his village? She notes his fever, vomiting, and diarrhea and knows he needs fluids immediately. The nurse who supervises her concurs, and they begin treatment. In the meantime, the nurse sends word for an ambulance from the nearby clinic to retrieve him, and she tells the family to limit their contact with others and to watch for similar symptoms in themselves for three weeks.

The local clinic is fully staffed and

and, as we've seen, lack the public health infrastructure to cope with the outbreak. But strengthening it is what will change the path and progression of Ebola—or any disease.

"Many people are coming to help us deal with Ebola, and that is fine," Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf told a group of Partners In Health doctors during their visit to the country in September. "But they will disappear. The real issue is our health-care system."

How can we effectively partner with Liberia to bolster those systems? Obviously the first step is to support and supplement existing efforts to care for the sick. Many individuals, organizations, and governments have committed resources to this. But a longer-term effort must focus on partnering

From the Archives

December 1990

Worth Living For

THE ODDS that this note will arrive for your birthday are poor, but know that I'm with you in spirit as you celebrate 16 big ones. ... What I want to say—some of it isn't too jolly birthday talk, but it's real.

Yesterday I stood looking down at a 16-year-old who had been killed a few hours earlier. I know a lot of kids even younger who are dead. This is a terrible time in El Salvador for youth. A lot of idealism and commitment are getting snuffed out here now.

The reasons why so many people are being killed are quite complicated, yet there are some clear, simple strands. One is that many people have found a meaning to life, to sacrifice, struggle, and even to death. And whether their life span is 16 years, 60, or 90—for them, their life has had a purpose. In many ways, they are fortunate people.

Brooklyn is not passing through the drama of El Salvador, but some things hold true wherever one is, and at whatever age. What I'm saying is, I hope you come to find that which gives life a deep meaning for you—something worth living for, maybe even worth dying for—something that energizes you, enthralls you, enables you to keep moving ahead. I can't tell you what that might be—that's for you to find, to choose, to love. I can just encourage you to start looking, and support you in the search. ■

Sister Ita Ford was a Maryknoll missionary in El Salvador when she wrote this letter in August 1980 to her 16-year-old niece, who lived in Brooklyn. Ford was killed three months later by a right-wing death squad.



with the government to build a decentralized health-care network that links communities to clinics to hospitals.

A strong system starts at the community level, by recruiting, training, and paying villagers to serve as professional health workers. With supervision and supplies, they can treat the bulk of health issues people in their villages face by administering vaccines, dispensing malaria medicine or deworming tablets, and providing neonatal care. Instead of patients traveling long distances to receive care, these health workers bring care to them.

For cases outside their expertise, local health centers and hospitals must be close by—and staffed with trained professionals who have access to medical equipment and supplies. Where those conditions don't exist, we must create them.

For example, Martha Tubman Memorial Hospital, in the rural village of Zwedru, could be treating patients but is virtually empty for lack of “staff and stuff.” Partners In Health is working with local partner Last Mile Health and the Ministry of Health to recruit and train clinicians, logisticians, and procurement

experts to ensure that patients who come to the hospital are seen by a clinician who has the tools he or she needs to deliver care.

Before the Ebola outbreak, Liberia had only 50 doctors working in public-health facilities serving a population of 4.3 million, according to its Ministry of Health. Meeting this doctor shortage—and shortages of all health-care workers—may mean establishing more medical and nursing schools, or residencies and fellowships, to help train the next generations of clinicians.

None of this is easy. This level of accompaniment requires a long view—and long-term investment. And it requires partnering with the government, so the work is integrated with the country's public sector. But ensuring poor people don't die from diseases that are treatable in wealthy countries demands a better response—one that is just and equitable. ■

Molly Marsh is managing editor of Partners In Health, an organization that works to provide health care to poor populations around the world.

By Tobias Winright

'Demilitarize the Police!'

Across the country, police departments act more like an occupying army than keepers of the peace.

AS A FORMER reserve police officer who has taught ethics at two police academies, I followed the news very closely after 18-year-old Michael Brown was shot to death by police officer Darren Wilson in nearby Ferguson, Mo. When I saw the military equipment of the St. Louis County Police—especially the sharpshooter on top of an armored vehicle aiming his rifle at the protesters—I said to my wife, “This may turn out to be very, very bad.”

Sen. Claire McCaskill argued in the midst of the protests that St. Louis County should “demilitarize the police response” in Ferguson, telling reporters, “The police response has been part of the problem.”

The militarization of police has been trending over the past few decades. When the thin blue line resembles an occupying force, it exacerbates racial tensions in neighborhoods and communities, making things

worse for everyone, including the police.

Some communities are starting to push back. For instance, the city council of Davis, Calif., recently directed its police department to get rid of a mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicle (worth \$700,000) that it had received free from the U.S. military's surplus program.

HOW DID THE militarization of the police happen? Radley Balko, in his troubling book *Rise of the Warrior Cop*, observes, “No one made a decision to militarize the police in America. The change has come slowly, the result of a generation of politicians and public officials fanning and exploiting public fears by declaring war on abstractions like crime, drug use, and terrorism. The resulting policies have made those war metaphors increasingly real.”

Beginning in the early 1970s, police

agencies received grants and equipment from the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, an agency in the Department of Justice. Agency director Don Santarelli worried that police departments “didn’t value education or training. They valued hardware.” At that time Birmingham, Ala., asked for an armored personnel carrier, and Los Angeles even requested a submarine. Cities across the country wanted training and gear for SWAT (special weapons and tactics) teams.

In 1987, an office in the Pentagon was established to oversee transfers of war equipment to civilian law enforcement agencies. After 9/11, the Department of Homeland Security began to provide police departments funding to purchase armored vehicles, body armor, aircraft, and other military equipment. Companies that make and sell military-grade hardware make quite a profit on the program.

The problem with the military metaphor for policing is that citizens are viewed as the enemy. Coercion, rather than persuasion, is central. Conflict, rather than cooperation, is expected. These, in turn, increase the likelihood of police brutality and excessive force.

The modern institution of policing began in 1829 with the establishment of the Metropolitan Police of London by Sir Robert Peel, who made sure his police were different from the military. The police were not armed in the same way, and officers were citizens who knew and interacted with their fellow citizens. The use of force was governed strictly and considered a last resort.

Such a model is commonly known today as community policing, which involves police presence in the community, working with fellow citizens, and treating others respectfully. Community policing can be very effective at re-establishing trust within society as well as at protecting people.

To be sure, policing in U.S. cities can be very dangerous, especially with so many guns circulating in our society. “Officers must be protected,” David H. Bayley and Robert M. Perito argue in their book *The Police in War*, “but in doing so the impression should not be created that they are going to war. War is not their business.” ■

Tobias Winright, a Sojourners contributing writer, teaches theological ethics at St. Louis University.

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On Being a Muslim Parent

LAST YEAR, as I was unpacking my son's school backpack, I found the children's book on the Prophet Muhammad that my wife and I read to him at night. He had brought it to school without telling us. "It was for show and tell," he explained to me.

You might think that my first reaction would be happiness. One of my goals as a Muslim parent is to help my kids feel connected to their faith. Clearly my son felt close enough to his religion to bring a book on the Prophet to share with his class.

What I actually felt was a shock of fear shoot down my spine. It was an immediate, visceral reaction. A whole slew of questions raced through my head. What did his teacher think of Muslims? What about his classmates? Would somebody say something ugly or bigoted about Islam during my son's pre-



Getty Images

Would his first taste of Islamophobia come at the age of 5 during show-and-tell?

sentation? Would his first taste of Islamophobia come at the age of 5 during show-and-tell?

My fear at that moment is one small window into what it feels like to be a Muslim-American parent at a time when Muslim extremism is on prominent display and Islamophobia in America continues to spread.

My wife will not let me watch news shows in our home for fear that one of our kids will saunter by during the segment discussing Muslim terrorism (and it seems to be a regular feature of the news these days) and ask what's going on.

The truth is, I would not have a good answer for them. I am doing my best to get two kids under 10 years old to love and identify with their religion in a secular urban environment. I don't have a way of

explaining to them yet that there are some people who call themselves Muslim who do stunningly evil things. When the TV talks about Islam, mostly they talk about those people. Moreover, when some Americans think about Islam, all they think about are those people.

I wish I could say that I see this situation improving sometime soon, but I don't. The emergence of groups such as ISIS who are equally adept at medieval brutality and 21st century communications suggests that Muslim extremism will continue to dominate the public discussion about Islam. That moderate Muslims refuse to denounce such groups is simply a lie. We do, with frequency and intensity. After all, it is our religion these murderers seek to deform, and it is moderate Muslims who they kill first.

There is little doubt that segments of the Muslim world are in crisis right now, experiencing everything from civil war to spasms of extremist violence. All religions go through crises. Those historical moments passed, and so will this one.

How can Americans who are not Muslim help? By learning more about the actual core principles of Islam—monotheism, mercy, ethical living—and recognizing that the vast majority of Muslims are doing their best to hold to these.

Turns out, that's precisely what my son experienced during show and tell.

"What happened when you showed your class the Muhammad book?" I asked gingerly.

"Everybody liked it," he said. "They said it was cool, all the different stories about how the Prophet helped people." And then he took off to play with his Legos.

A good lesson for me, that most of the Americans we come into contact with do not harbor ugly prejudices. And a good lesson for them, that their Muslim classmate is a normal kid, trying to have fun, do his best in school, and love his religion. ■



Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, writes about social justice from his perspective as a Muslim American of Indian heritage.

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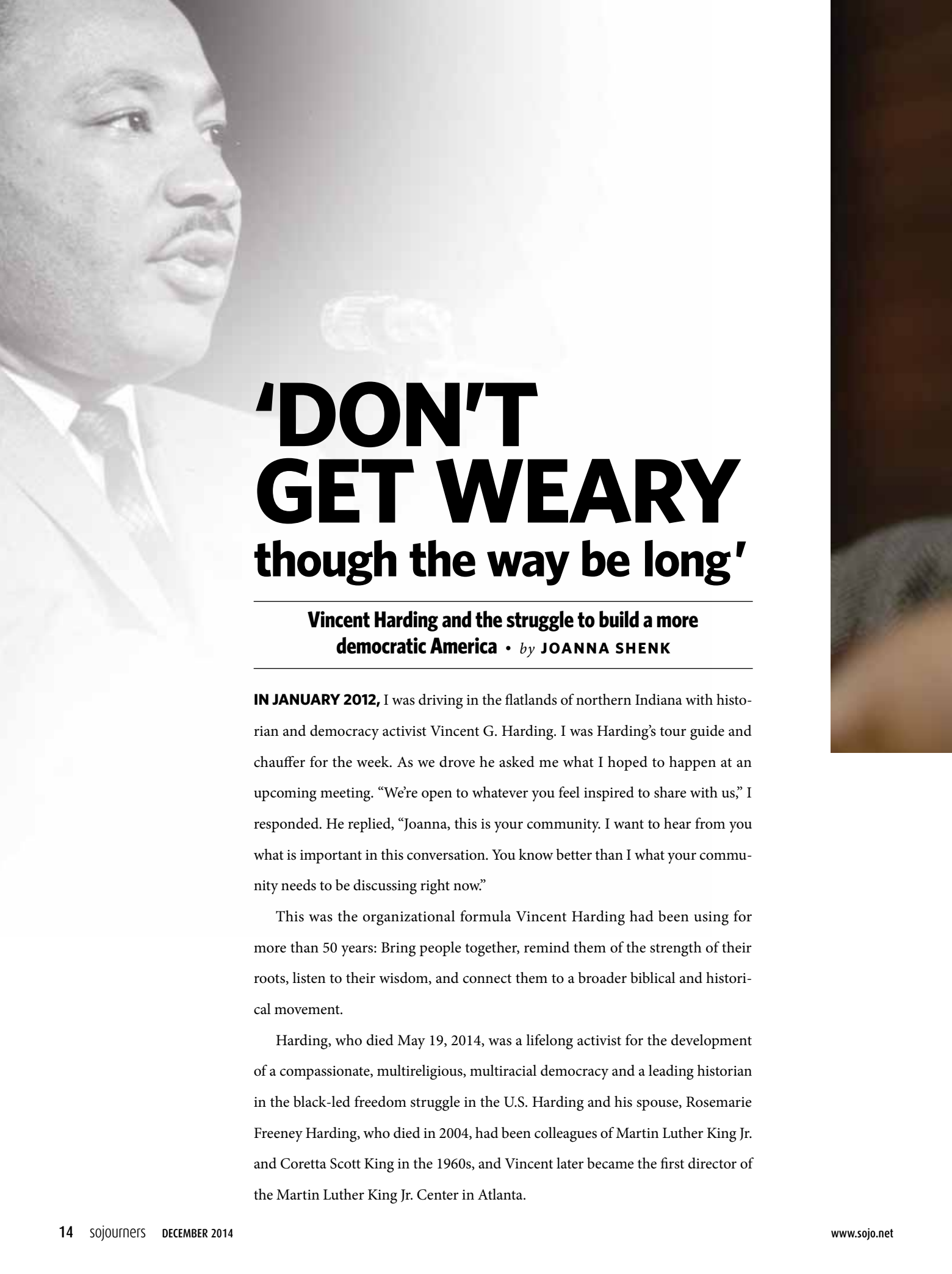
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'DON'T GET WEARY though the way be long'

**Vincent Harding and the struggle to build a more
democratic America • by JOANNA SHENK**

IN JANUARY 2012, I was driving in the flatlands of northern Indiana with historian and democracy activist Vincent G. Harding. I was Harding's tour guide and chauffeur for the week. As we drove he asked me what I hoped to happen at an upcoming meeting. "We're open to whatever you feel inspired to share with us," I responded. He replied, "Joanna, this is your community. I want to hear from you what is important in this conversation. You know better than I what your community needs to be discussing right now."

This was the organizational formula Vincent Harding had been using for more than 50 years: Bring people together, remind them of the strength of their roots, listen to their wisdom, and connect them to a broader biblical and historical movement.

Harding, who died May 19, 2014, was a lifelong activist for the development of a compassionate, multireligious, multiracial democracy and a leading historian in the black-led freedom struggle in the U.S. Harding and his spouse, Rosemarie Freeney Harding, who died in 2004, had been colleagues of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King in the 1960s, and Vincent later became the first director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center in Atlanta.



When historian, author, and long-time friend P. Sterling Stuckey heard about Harding's death, he said he found it hard to believe because "Vincent was larger than life." Harding's effect on movements for justice in the U.S. was far-reaching. He was a convener of scholars, activists, artists, youth, and people of faith. He believed that transformation happened when everyone was engaged and contributing—and he believed that everyone had something to offer in the creation of a compassionate, multiracial democracy.

IN 2012, HARDING served as the distinguished Martin Luther King Jr. scholar-in-residence at Morehouse College in Atlanta, where he taught a course on King and the future of America. A trained historian, Harding valued much more than the historical record found in books. He valued the embodied texts of the living. History is also found in the songs of lament and

defiance, he said, the poems of hope and despair, the wailings of anger and mourning, and the dances of freedom and beauty.

At the beginning of each class, Harding would pay tribute to one of his mentors, the great Ella Baker, by having students listen to "Ella's Song," by Sweet Honey in the Rock: "We who believe in freedom cannot rest. We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes."

Baker was a powerful teacher in the movement, especially mentoring younger organizers. After Harding spoke during a mass meeting in Albany, Ga., in the mid-1960s, Baker gave him critical advice. "The people are hungry," she told him. "You must not merely excite them. Do not stand in front of them unless you have something to teach."

These formative words were emblematic

"Vincent, you see what kind of trouble you got me into?!" King said.

of the mutual learning that happened throughout the Southern freedom movement. When speaking of King's legacy, Harding often recalled that teachers such

as Baker put King in his proper context. "[King] was created by the movement, and he also created parts of the movement," Harding told me in 2011. "We

were brothers. And sometimes we were just two short guys, at 5 feet 8 inches and 5 feet 9 inches, trying to play basketball at the retreats."

PART OF THE reason Harding was able to envision such sweeping social change was because his own life told the story of transformation. Born in Harlem in 1931, Harding was raised by his mother, Mabel L. Broome, and the close-knit congregation at Victory Tabernacle Seventh-Day Christian Church.

Ryan Rodrick Beiler



Harding said it was a place where “everyone knew my name, and everyone loved me, and everyone pushed me to be my best self.”

At 22, Harding was drafted into the Army. He set his sights on officer candidate school with a commission in military intelligence. But during basic training he began studying the Bible, and something in him began to shift. While his church had focused on the Old Testament, he now found himself drawn to Jesus and the New Testament. One day in bayonet training, Harding recalled a familiar song: “Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.” Then in his mind he heard a chilling addition: “And when they

grow up, and your country declares that they’re enemies, you’re going to cut their guts out.”

That harsh, loving voice of God disturbed Harding’s peace. “I did not know that, in those long wrestlings with the text and Spirit, I would be engaging in a major step on my journey beyond the borders of the loving family-tribe of believers at Victory Tabernacle.” It became

clear to Harding that he could not pursue a life in the military and be a follower of Jesus.

After he was discharged in 1955, Harding attended the University of Chicago for a graduate degree. While studying Christian history, he came across the Anabaptists. “I [was] deeply impressed by the fact that, for hundreds of years, some people within the Christian faith had believed all the things that I had recently come to believe,” Harding said.

In Chicago, Harding met Elmer Neufeld from Woodlawn Mennonite Church and Delton Franz, Woodlawn’s pastor, both of whom were white. Seeking to build a multiracial congregation, they asked Harding to join as a co-pastor. In 1958, those three—along with Glen Bayes and Ed Riddick, who was also black—traveled south to learn about the freedom movement. It was the first time Harding had been in the South. In Montgomery, Ala., he met Martin and Coretta Scott King for the first time.

King was recovering from a stab wound, so the visitors were ushered into his bedroom. In his pajamas, King jokingly congratulated them on making it through Mississippi. As the visit ended, King looked at Harding and Riddick, saying, “Now you guys, you’re Mennonites, and you know something about nonviolence. You understand what we’re trying to do down here. You ought to come back and help us.”

This powerful encounter was a turning point in Harding’s life—one that would move him beyond the borders of the Mennonite Church and into the heart of the black-led movement for the deepening and broadening of democracy in the U.S.

THREE YEARS LATER, the newly married Vincent and Rosemarie moved to Atlanta to found Mennonite House, an interracial voluntary service unit that served as a meeting place and safe haven for movement workers across the South. Activists and organizers including Septima Clark, Fannie Lou Hamer, Alice and Staughton Lynd, Andrew Young, and Howard Zinn spent time there—and Martin and Coretta King lived around the corner.

The Hardings traveled across the South, speaking, teaching, organizing, and meeting with white people who wanted to support the freedom struggle. “[King] wanted us to do this because we weren’t on staff with any of the movement organizations,” Harding said. “We were in our role as Mennonites and were representing the Mennonites. This opened doors because we were a young black couple—and eventually a young black couple with a little baby—who were a part of this crazy group of people called the Mennonites. What could be less threatening than that?”

Most critical, this work drew the Hardings—and they drew King—deep into the heart of the Albany Movement, in Albany, Ga., the first mass movement with the goal of desegregating an entire community. More than 1,000 African Americans were arrested, but the campaign ultimately failed to make major change. It was, however, King’s first major involvement in such a campaign, and it set the stage for the organizing strategy and ultimate success experienced later in Birmingham, Ala.

Over Christmas break in 1966, Harding



Family photo

His hope was not optimism, but an unfaltering belief in the human capacity for transformation through love.

Above, Vincent Harding and Rosemarie Freaney Harding in 1961.

drafted for King what became one of King's most incisive and controversial speeches. King delivered "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence" at Riverside Church in New York City on April 4, 1967, in which he spoke out against the Vietnam War and took on "the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism." Many civil rights leaders, as well as major newspapers, publicly condemned King for the speech. A few months later, King called Harding to say, "Vincent, you see what kind of trouble you got me into?!"

"[King] was more exposed as a result of taking that stand," Harding said in a 2007 interview with *Sojourners*, "but he knew he was going to be more exposed. When he was assassinated, precisely a year to the day after that speech, on a very personal level—in addition to all the sense of loss I felt in terms of my friend—I also had some deeply difficult feelings about the possible ways I had contributed to the forces that led to his assassination. I was working on that guilt and grief combination for a while."

IN THE 1980s, Vincent became professor of religion and social transformation at Iliff School of Theology in Denver and served as chief historical consultant for *Eyes on the Prize*, the award-winning documentary on the Southern freedom movement. Producer Orlando Bagwell recalls Harding telling him, "Brother Orlando, stories are not useful unless they serve the public learning and questioning." Over the years the two men worked together on numerous historical and cultural films. Harding became Bagwell's teacher, confidant, and friend. "Vincent helped me see that life was not about how well people spoke about us in death but about how much our deeds and actions contributed to living," Bagwell said.

In 2003, the Veterans of Hope Project, which Vincent and Rosemarie founded in the late 1990s, launched Ambassadors of Hope, a youth leadership program. Drawing on history, culture, and spiritual traditions, these young leaders learn about the development of democracy. One Ambassadors of Hope participant was Lalo Montoya, a Dreamer who grew up in Denver. Often, Montoya said, he felt caught between two worlds—never being Mexican enough and never being American enough. "Uncle

"I had some deeply difficult feelings," Harding said, "about the possible ways I had contributed to the forces that led to his assassination."

Vincent [as Harding was known to many younger people] encouraged me to see my bicultural identity as a gift rather than a burden, and as an opportunity to help others learn," said Montoya, now a seasoned immigrant-rights organizer.

A few years ago at an Ambassadors of Hope gathering in Denver, two teenagers from Philadelphia had a question for Harding: "Uncle Vincent, why do you love us so?" These teenagers articulated what many felt in Harding's presence—a deep abiding love. Harding never shielded himself from pain or despair. Instead he looked at it all with unflinching hope. His hope was not optimism, but an unfaltering belief in the human capacity for transformation through love.

Harding would be the first to say that the story of his life is the story about the movements that shaped him and that he helped shape. It's about the people that "loved him into life," the theme of his unfinished memoir. He was not looking for a hero's pedestal in life, or in death. He knew that movements

for justice were not about the heroes. Rather, they happened because of the commitments of multitudes of people hidden from the public eye. They happened because communities were willing to take risks together, to sing songs of resistance, to learn from their young people, and to remember the elders who had gone before.

In his later years, Vincent Harding often opened gatherings by teaching people to sing with each other, for each other, and for the world, to the tune of the old slave spiritual "Jacob's Ladder," this song: "We are building up a new world ... Builders must be strong. Courage, sisters, don't get weary. Courage, brothers, don't get weary. Courage, people, don't get weary, though the way be long." ■

Joanna Shenk, associate pastor of First Mennonite Church of San Francisco, is editor of *Widening the Circle: Experiments in Christian Discipleship* and co-producer of the *Iconocast* podcast.

Ryan Rodrick Beiler





BY BRITTANY SHOOT

COMPASSION IN THE STACKS

The San Francisco Public Library reaches out to homeless patrons through an innovative social work program.

ON A RECENT Friday afternoon, Joe Bank makes his way quietly through the stacks in the San Francisco Public Library's main branch. Books aren't on the 33-year-old's mind. He's on the lookout for people in need—people who might need the same social services he once did, when he was homeless and living in a city park.

Bank isn't just a concerned fellow citizen—though he certainly is that. He's also on the job, as part of the country's first in-house, library-specific social work team. Officially, he's known as a HASA, one of six Health and Safety Associates employed by the library in partnership with the San Francisco Department of Health. The public library HASAs are all formerly homeless, thereby possessing an innate ability to notice the telltale signs of unhoused people in need of a helping hand. Bank's boss is Leah Esguerra, the country's first full-time psychiatric social worker employed in a public library.

The library offers a blueprint to others seeking to assist the homeless rather than shut them out.

Mike Kozmin/San Francisco Examiner

Leah Esguerra, below, the first social worker hired by a U.S. library, oversees a team of formerly homeless patrons who do health outreach at the San Francisco Public Library. Joe Bank, right, is part of that team.

Esguerra's small outreach team is tasked with more than answering questions or offering help to clients who need assistance locating or securing social services. HASAs also train library staff on how to respond to patrons in need and how to diffuse and de-escalate tense situations with calm, collected compassion. Furthermore, working as a HASA is a six-to-12-month vocational training program, after which the outreach workers can graduate to other social service



jobs. (Bank is currently the only HASA who has stayed on longer than a year.) Esguerra says that because her staffers are all formerly homeless, they find a special purpose in their ability to give back to people in situations similar to their own. "They love the routine and their contribution," she explains.

As the only other long-term SFPL outreach staffer besides Esguerra, Bank has been able to help countless people since becoming a HASA. He says his job isn't just a job, or simply a way to pay the rent. "It's a pretty magical thing when you see someone you helped from the start come back, now housed," he says. "They always come back to say thanks. Always."

YOU MIGHT SAY libraries are one of the last truly public services, offering patrons almost limitless information in every medium, from dusty print volumes to online resources just a cursor click away. But anyone who has visited an urban (or even suburban) public library in recent decades knows these hallowed literary spaces also often double as shelters on blisteringly hot or blustery cold days. Libraries are also generally safe, a serious concern as rates of hate crimes against the homeless have spiked in the past 15 years. And they have another



Photos by Scott Shaler/KQED

even more basic necessity: public restrooms that are, indeed, open to the public.

For perhaps obvious reasons, quantifying homelessness is difficult. But government agencies and nonprofits agree on one thing: Since the 1980s, homelessness rates in the

United States have skyrocketed. The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that there are currently more than 600,000 people homeless every night in the U.S., including both homeless families and individuals.

San Francisco has an estimated 7,000-plus homeless residents in a city of more than 825,000. It isn't the country's most urgent

It's also an area filled with single-room occupancy hotels, or SROs, a low-rent residential option a step up the food chain for the previously unhoused.

The Tenderloin, or what locals call "the TL," is especially well known for its odd geographic location, bordering tourist mecca Union Square and at the crosshairs between tony Nob Hill and the rapidly gentrifying South of Market district. Travel forums and TripAdvisor ratings are littered with (often unsympathetic) accounts from unsuspecting visitors who wandered too deep into the TL and happened upon stereotypical signs of life on the streets: people sleeping in doorways, public urination, and, sometimes, drug use.

In 2004, the city launched a 10-year plan

"It's a pretty magical thing when you see someone you helped from the start come back, now housed."

housing and poverty crisis. But in the context of yet another technology sector boom fueling the city's hypergentrification, and in a nation still emerging from a deep recession, San Francisco's homeless are one of the most discussed and visible unhoused populations in the country.

The San Francisco Public Library main branch is located in the Civic Center district, in the shadow of the city's government buildings, at the geographic heart of the rising tensions around housing and homelessness in San Francisco. The Civic Center is part of the larger Tenderloin neighborhood, a historically poor area with high crime rates and a dense concentration of homeless residents.

to eradicate homelessness. A decade later, it's hard to see that anything has changed. But despite this rather depressing civic backdrop, the San Francisco Public Library has provided a blueprint and some much-needed inspiration to other North American libraries seeking to assist the homeless rather than shut them out.

Inspired by the success of the San Francisco program, in 2011 the public library in Edmonton, Alberta, launched its own social service program, hiring three full-time outreach workers. In January 2012, the main library in Tucson, Ariz., hired a public health nurse to handle outreach at six branches.

Continued on Page 22



TRANSFORM POTENTIAL INTO EXPONENTIAL

"I've been able to integrate what I learned at Fuller and collaborate with others on a mission to bring the transforming truths of Jesus to this place."

Fuller alumna Deb Walkemeyer turned her final DMin project into a community garden that is bringing unity and healthy food options to a Compton neighborhood besieged by human trafficking and gang activity.

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Clarissa Eat waits with everything she owns for the San Francisco Public Library to open. She's been helped by the library's social worker.

Continued from Page 20

Splitting 40 hours a week across multiple locations was too much for one person, though. Six months into the pilot program, five nurses were hired to share the workload. In May 2014, Jean Badalamenti became the Washington, D.C. public library's first health and human services coordinator, only the second in the nation after Esguerra. Esguerra and Bank also note, with measured pride, that teams of researchers and students from as far away as Japan and the U.K. have visited the SFPL to better understand homelessness in the U.S. and what some public agencies are doing to help residents in need.

Lovingkindness and civil rights in action can be messy business. It's especially challenging for a public sector institution tasked with providing resources to every potential patron, housed or otherwise. It's important to note the assistance available at the San Francisco Public Library isn't a free-for-all. Patrons who have housing may misunderstand or complain about how the homeless use the facilities, but the library still has a basic code of conduct. Most libraries set their own rules, following the 1992 circuit court ruling that libraries are a limited public forum, meaning available for set purposes such as reading. At the SFPL, for example, sleeping isn't permitted. If a patron repeatedly breaks the rules, he or she will be asked to leave the premises for up to three days. Seattle, another city where the public library is at the heart of the homelessness debate, also limits sleeping, large bags, and alcohol consumption on the premises.

When Esguerra took the job six years ago, she knew she'd be working within the confines of the city's unique socio-geography but with the advantage of leaning on its historically progressive values. Previously, she worked in a more general capacity with the mentally ill and chronically homeless at the San Francisco Homeless Outreach Team, a multidisciplinary collaboration between the city's Department of Public Health, Human Services Agency, and Community Awareness and Treatment Services Inc. At the SFPL, she says she wanted to challenge others to consider "a different face of homelessness." Esguerra met with every library department to clarify expectations and ask what department heads most needed.

She isn't just there to assist the homeless.



Her job is to better train everyone on staff to ensure that every individual gets to truly enjoy and benefit from the library's extensive resources.

Bank joined Esguerra's team three years ago after getting off the streets and getting clean. His hair is buzzed close to the scalp, and he speaks softly and deliberately. When he hears a commotion near a bank of elevators, he walks quickly but quietly toward the noise, cautious but open-minded and ready to help. Bank survived several bouts of homelessness in Oregon and northern California before landing in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, which has doubled as a crash pad for the country's disaffected and disadvantaged youth since at least the 1960s.

If you know to look for him, Bank is easy to spot in a button-up flannel shirt, a black nylon backpack slung over one shoulder. Inside is a shiny, overstuffed black binder,

Lovingkindness and civil rights in action can be messy business.

an impressive toolkit of his own creation. In a sea of high-tech devices, many patrons' faces illuminated by smartphone screens, Bank's binder of lo-fi solutions seems decidedly disruptive. It's also practical. When you live hand-to-mouth, you tend to need a flyer, maybe a map—not a URL. Bank is constantly updating his labeled files. He knows when and where the next free STD screening will be. He can point anyone toward the closest free meals program in town, or a pick-up spot for free toiletries. If you need a safe, quiet place to nap during the day, Bank will point you to St. Boniface, a Tenderloin congregation that opens its sanctuary pews for sleeping every day from 6 a.m. until 3

p.m. If there's a 30-day bed open in a shelter, he's the guy who can direct you toward it.

Esguerra says that in their line of work, there's no hard and fast definition of success. Homelessness can be a revolving door—and the library is one, too. Providing long-term care to the city's most needy residents is a nuanced accomplishment, and one often without a tidy, linear narrative. She recalls a situation from a few years ago that, despite its lack of storybook happy ending, showcases what her program can mean in an individual's life.

For nearly 20 years, a chronically homeless man had come to the library. Mostly, he stayed out of trouble. The security guards all knew him; everyone did. He was a worn, tough guy—"but deep inside, a marshmallow," Esguerra remembers. Because the library staff knew him, they were able to spot when his health seemed to suddenly decline and get him into a clinic for a much-overdue checkup. A cancer diagnosis gave him a few months to live. But when he passed away a year later, Esguerra says, he wasn't alone, out on the streets. Instead, the people who had watched over him for the past two decades surrounded him. A blessing is a blessing, no matter how small.

Bank is the first HASA to work at other library branches in town—including two days at Park Branch, next to his former home in Golden Gate Park. The main branch offers a lot of open space in which to have a conversation and maintain confidentiality. By contrast, the Park Branch is small with a community room in the basement. It's also an area where Bank's gentle instincts are especially needed. "We all have our own style," he says.

Bank has basic guiding principles, such as trying to never make assumptions and to never pester or embarrass anyone. If he senses there's a particularly sensitive situation, he'll find a quiet, neutral space and ask a client to join him there for a confidential chat.

Bank never imagined he'd end up as a social worker. But the job suits him so incredibly well, he's pursuing certification in social work. "This is righteous," he says. "This is what I want to do." ■

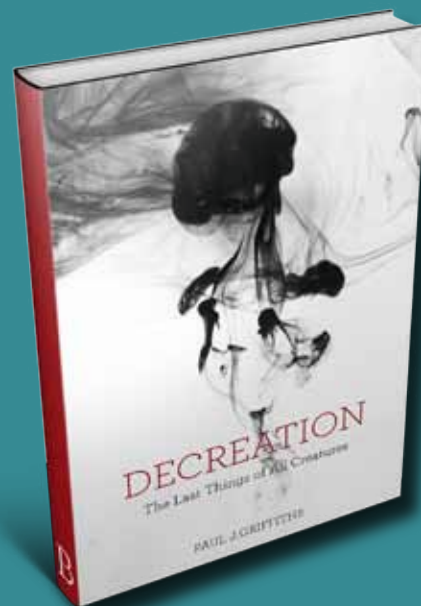
Brittany Shoot is a Sojourners contributing writer.

Scott Shafer/KQED

The End of All Things

"*Decreation* sets forth a theology of creation, redemption, and the refusal of redemption that is without equal in terms of erudition, elegance, and brilliant engagement with historically significant Christian teaching and doctrine."

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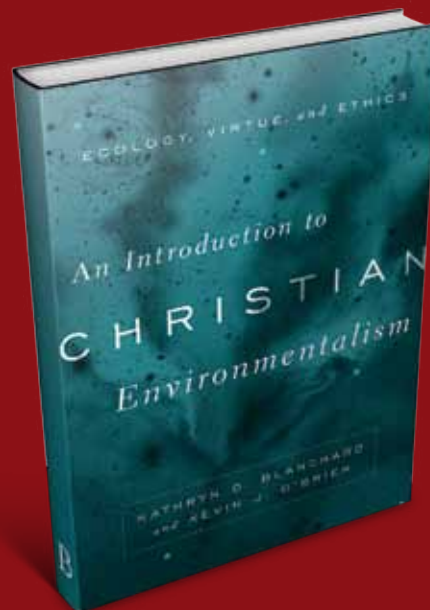


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BY ANDREW DUNN-BAUMAN

How an act of hatred brought together two unlikely allies in the struggle for peace.



PARDEEP KALEKA and former white supremacist Arno Michaelis clasped hands during a radio interview on the first anniversary of a mass shooting that changed both of their lives. Their embrace was the ultimate symbol of brotherhood—

two starkly different backgrounds united by a common goal of peace and understanding in an oftentimes cruel and unforgiving world.

Pardeep Kaleka is a member of the Sikh faith community. His father was one of the six worshippers killed on Aug. 5, 2012, at the Sikh temple, or gurdwara, in Oak Creek, Wis. Three more were injured that day before the man opening fire on the temple was wounded by the police. The gun-

Kaleka and Michaelis managed to transform their anger into a positive force in the world.

man then prepared for one final pull of the trigger, taking his own life.

The shooter was Wade Michael Page, a white supremacist, acting on his own volition that Sunday morning. He had spent his life practicing violence and hatred toward all kinds of people he felt to be “different” from him. This hatred culminated in a final unthinkable act, killing six people in cold blood at their holy place of worship.

There was angst, confusion, and grief among the Wisconsin Sikh community after this terrible tragedy. But where many may have expected anger from those most deeply affected, the Sikhs responded with something thoroughly refreshing: peace.

IN THE 21ST CENTURY, peace seems to be more of a mental construct than a state of being. The world around us is filled with conflict, struggle, and anguish. But when the Oak



A man with short brown hair and black-rimmed glasses is shown from the chest up. He is holding both hands up, palms facing forward, to display matching tattoos. Each palm features a small red ink drawing of a person being shot, with the date '8.5.12' written in black ink below it. He is wearing a dark blue sweater with yellow and red stripes on the sleeves. His left wrist has a large, colorful tattoo and an orange wristband. The background is a solid red wall.

Pardeep Kaleka and Arno Michaelis commemorate the Aug. 5, 2012, shooting with matching tattoos.

F BROTHERHOOD



A sign at the candlelight vigil on the first anniversary of the shooting at the Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wis.

Creek Sikh community had an opportunity to respond likewise to an act of hatred, they refused.

Instead, the Sikhs reached out to the world with a passion to promote peace. The Sikhs took the opportunity to educate the world about who they are—a faith community filled with peace and devotion. But more important, they taught the world an incredibly valuable lesson: Answering hate with

“underprivileged.” Serve 2 Unite uses the arts and service-learning activities to teach these young people the importance of spreading peace and connecting with all races and creeds.

“We bring former supremacists and survivors from around the world into the classroom to meet our student leadership chapters and to demonstrate that people are going through these same struggles,”

“Being a survivor means that you take responsibility for what has happened and you keep it from happening to someone else.”

more hate leads nowhere. Love and understanding is the only path forward.

It was with this in mind that Kaleka, the son of one of the victims, accepted a dinner invitation from Michaelis, a reformed neo-Nazi, shortly after the Oak Creek shooting. Although admittedly nervous, Kaleka resisted the urge to cancel the meeting. It was fortuitous that he did.

Michaelis, a former member of a white-power rock band, attributes his stunning transformation in part to becoming a single father and also to the unrelenting kindness of strangers—even those whom he tried so hard to hate. Racist tattoos that once covered Michaelis’ body have since been removed and replaced with messages of peace. Both Michaelis and Kaleka now wear the same “8.5.12” memorial tattoo on their left palms.

The two have formed a striking bond, establishing Serve 2 Unite—an organization that is “transforming society via the gentle power of fearless creativity, compassion, and service.” The organization works mainly with Milwaukee inner-city youth who are often deemed as “problem kids” or

Michaelis said. “For a kid from the inner city, it can be real hard to visualize the world beyond the block you live on, so connecting them with other global efforts can be very empowering.”

As a counselor for another global peace-making effort, the Ulster Project Milwaukee, I had the privilege of hearing Michaelis and Kaleka speak last year. The Ulster Project brought 12 teenagers from Belfast, Northern Ireland, to Milwaukee to stay with 12 U.S. teens for a full month. Half of the teenagers from Belfast were Protestant and half were Catholic, groups that have been warring for decades in Northern Ireland. For 35 years, the Ulster Project’s mission has been to foster unity in Northern Ireland by empowering future leaders of the country with peace-making tools.

The 24 teenagers were still struggling with the mission of the project at mid-month when they were due to meet with the Serve 2 Unite leaders. Many of the Northern Irish students, especially those from well-off families, felt removed from the conflict in Belfast and didn’t grasp the importance of

the project, as peacemaking didn’t directly affect their lives.

But when Michaelis and Kaleka started telling their story, a wave of understanding washed over the group. The teens began connecting on a personal level to the idea of spreading peace. They were mesmerized by the power in each man’s words. Before them were two people, from polar-opposite backgrounds, who somehow managed to overcome their differences and find an essential common value: humanity.

Serve 2 Unite emphasizes that we are all part of the human race, with no reason to hate one another. Kaleka and Michaelis exemplify this. They have managed to take their anger and personal struggles and transform them into a positive force in the world. The two men have formed an unlikely partnership that only came to fruition by taking the time to understand each other. We live in a time when that is far too rare.

On the first anniversary of the gurdwara tragedy, Kaleka spoke on the impact the shooting had on the local Sikh community. “That day we made a decision, that we’re not going to let this define us and that we’re not going to be known as victims. We’re going to be known as survivors,” Kaleka said. “Being a survivor means that you take responsibility for what has happened and you keep it from happening to someone else.”

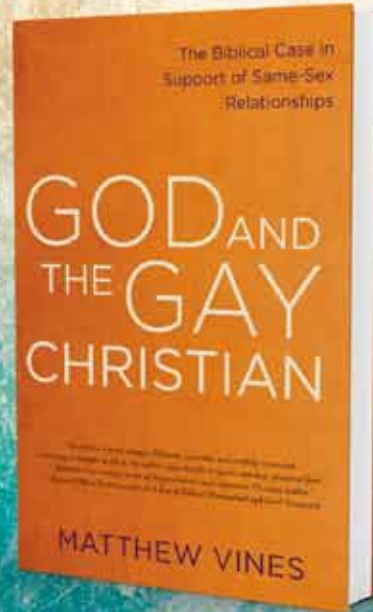
Michaelis was awed by the way Kaleka responded to the shooting. “It was inspirational,” Michaelis said, “to see a person who just had his entire community and tradition assaulted in such a grievous way [and hear him] say, ‘What can I do better to prevent this from happening again in the future?’”

THE SIKH community held a candlelight vigil on the anniversary of the mass shooting. Shining lights gleamed from the top of the gurdwara, spelling out a simple message: “Uplift and heal.”

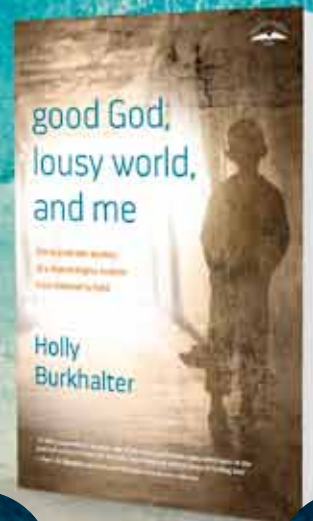
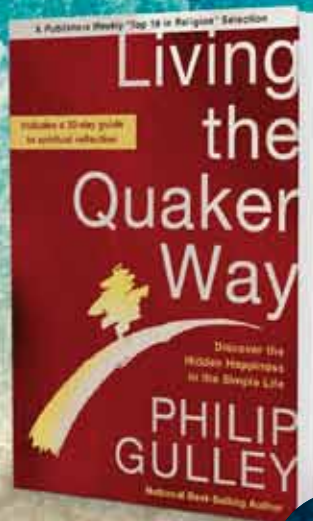
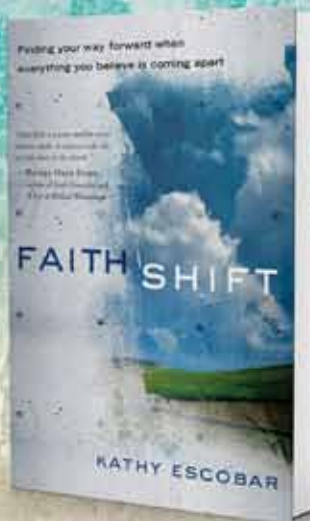
Despite losing several members to violence, the response of the local Sikh community continues to be forgiveness, compassion, and an appeal to the global community to make peace—starting with the simplest acts of kindness. ■

Andrew Dunn-Bauman, a freelance writer in Milwaukee, always looks to find the good in the city he loves to call home.

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LEFT BEHIND

Long-term unemployment can mean losing not only income, but your sense of purpose. Faith and advocacy groups can help—but will it be enough in a shifting economy?

CHRIS PASKI HAS a binder containing computer screen shots of every job he's applied for in the last year and a half.

"I keep track of everything—I'm an engineer," he says.

Paski blitzed the commutable radius around his Exton, Pa., home with résumés. He extended his search to Washington, D.C. If he found work there, he planned to sleep in a travel trailer during the week and return home on weekends. Despite impressive experience as an aerospace systems engineer and sending out 270 résumés, he's scored just one interview. He's still looking, and he says his faith is intact.

"I know the Lord will take care of me, but he seems to be taking his time," Paski says, laughing.

But Mike Heaney of West Chester, Pa., doubts that God has a plan for his job search. He remembers a previous bout of unemployment when he lived in North Carolina that changed him.

It was a dark time, he recalls. Problems in his marriage escalated because of unemployment. That led to divorce. Money was tight and medical benefits a luxury. When he needed some major dental work, he drove from North Carolina to Mexico, where it was done for 75 percent less. "They call it dentistry tourism," he says.

He attended job support groups at a church where he repeatedly heard that God had a plan for anyone who was unemployed.

But after seeing the devastation that unemployment caused to the people there, he disagrees with that—a belief he says he's reconciled with his Catholicism.

Going through a spiritual crisis isn't uncommon for the jobless. It's triggered by a job market where the unemployed are in a *Hunger Games*-style fight for survival: Find a new job in six months or a time bomb goes off. They'll be labeled then as "long-term unemployed"—out of work for 27 weeks or more, as defined by the U.S. Labor Department.

After a year of unemployment, just a third will find any kind of job, according to a Brookings Institute study released in 2014. However, only 11 percent will find steady, full-time employment during the same time period. Rand Ghayad, then a graduate student from Northeastern University, made up 4,800 fake résumés for 600 real job openings. He varied the content to determine what made employers interested in job candidates. Employers rarely called the people who were out of work for six months or more, he reported.

Studies such as Ghayad's indicate that the perception among some human resources departments is that the long-term unemployed are damaged goods.

"They have labeled them as having stale skills," says Rick McHugh, staff attorney at the National Employment Law Project in New York City. "But I've never seen any place that shows that at a certain point people forget how

It's not uncommon for the jobless to go through a spiritual crisis.

to do things. There's a group consensus that this exists, but it's something they've deduced, not proven."

IN PENNSYLVANIA, some of the long-term unemployed turn to Joseph's People, an ecumenical nonprofit organization founded at St. Joseph's Parish in Downingtown. The group has grown to 14 chapters throughout the state, with about 2,000 members. Co-founder and president Cheryl Spaulding estimates about 75 percent of them are long-term unemployed. They are generally 45 and over and can be from any industry, she says. About 90 percent hold a bachelor's degree, nearly half have a master's degree, and about 5 percent have a Ph.D.

The chapters hold biweekly meetings with events such as mock job interviews, résumé writing workshops, networking seminars, and guest speakers. The members also often act as a support group to each other. The all-volunteer organization does everything they can to help. But Spaulding has seen the worst of what can happen to the long-term unemployed.

"They will frequently go through all their retirement funds, and depending on their age they'll go through all their children's college funds," she says. "They go through all their savings, they'll second mortgage their house, many of them will lose their house, and marriages fall apart. It's a complete disaster. It's the thing that I think this country should be ashamed of itself for, because we basically destroyed an entire group of middle-class people."

If the long-term unemployed don't land a full-time job after an extended period, they could fall into one of three categories.

If they're in their 60s, they take Social Security benefits as early as possible and retire prematurely, wounded from the loss of income. Another group will settle for the abyss of underemployment or the treadmill of several part-time jobs. The most unfortunate lose their homes or are evicted from their apartments. If they don't have family or friends to take them in, they could end up homeless.

Brenda Caley of Coatesville, Pa., is a technical writer who for a time was homeless due to unemployment. With a boom in companies hiring contract labor instead of full-time employees, it's led to insecurity, inconsistency, and erratic pay for some workers. For Caley,



I were ministering to a homeless person, I could be effective because I've been homeless."

When psychiatrist Victor Frankl reflected on his time in a World War II concentration camp while writing his landmark book *Man's Search for Meaning*, he compared the psychological state of being in a concentration camp to unemployment. The unemployed also didn't know when or if their sentence would end. And the lack of work removed what Frankl believed was essential: a sense of purpose and meaning.

Clergy and spiritual directors who counsel the long-term unemployed recognize the agonizing loss of purpose that comes with extended unemployment. Work fulfills a spiritual hunger for community, for using skills, and for providing for one's family. When that's taken away it can trigger an economically induced dark night of the soul.

KIRT BARDEN WENT through one. Living in New Orleans in 2005, he counted 22 trees that toppled around his house when Hurricane Katrina was raging. For days he lived with no electricity and stood in line waiting for rations. His aunt and mother-in-law died from storm-related medical problems. His insurance examination business was decimated.

He left New Orleans and moved to the Downingtown, Pa. area to be closer to family. He spent 14 months looking for a job and sensed age discrimination—which he says even people in their 40s can face.

"I was angry, and my first reaction was 'Why did you do this, Lord?'" he says. "But then I realized that some things became more important to me than God. My idol was living for the corporate world."

He believes he came out of the adversity a much more spiritual person and now serves as a consultant in several industries.

Jim Bogdan, who performs spiritual direction and pastoral counseling at St. Joseph's Parish in Downingtown, says unemployment can trigger a deep re-evaluation of one's life.

"Has God caused it so you will re-evaluate? Possibly," he says. "But I don't believe God wants to knock us down; I believe God wants to lift us up all the time. But in our culture and in our economic society, we're at the whim of employers and those who seek profits first."



At one point when Brenda Caley was between jobs, she was homeless and camped in the woods with her two German Shepherds. Top, Kirt Barden survived Hurricane Katrina when he lived in New Orleans only to face a life-altering bout of unemployment after he moved to Pennsylvania.

gaps between jobs over the past eight years have caused problems.

At one point she was homeless for seven months—some of which she spent camped in a tent in the woods with her two German Shepherds. She also stayed at low-budget motels and at homes of friends and acquaintances, sleeping in chilly basements, hot attics, and guest rooms. During bad patches, she used food banks. She's currently been hired for another contract assignment. But she says the experience changed her spiritually, and that one day she'd like to do some kind of ministry.

"People tend to be more effective when they've been there themselves," she says. "If

Photos by John A. Zukowski

Deacon Jim Bogdan, below, of St. Joseph's Parish in Downingtown, Pa., is a spiritual director who counsels long-term unemployed people.

Economist Valerie Wilson of the Economic Policy Institute says there's one central problem keeping employers from hiring the long-term unemployed.

"There's not enough demand in the economy to put more people back to work," she says. "You have the unemployed as well as wage stagnation. There's not a lot of pressure on employers to raise wages when they feel they can hire someone who will work for less."

So the tight job market has produced a pecking order of the unemployed. At the bottom of the list are the long-term unemployed who are disproportionately men, people over 50, and African Americans. Until the economy recovers more significantly, the long-term unemployed may be last to be hired.

McHugh of the National Employment Law Project has studied all the recessions since World War II. Generally, the downturns last about two years. But the current downturn has dragged on much longer. And this one has a different tone, he says. He's surprised at the lack of protest from the unemployed and some progressive groups who have traditionally organized them.

"There seems to be this assumption that you have to accept the political realities instead of trying to change the political realities," he says. And the political reality is that not much is being done.

Early in 2014, a White House plan to help the long-term unemployed received widespread media attention. It was an online voluntary pledge for companies to hire the long-term unemployed. More than 300 companies signed on. Most were small companies. However, some Fortune 500 companies took the pledge too. But are they hiring the long-term unemployed? Several inquiries were sent to corporations on the list asking how many long-term unemployed they hired, but they went unanswered.

Instead, there are monthly government reports that the economy is creakily improving. But it's not happening quickly enough to help many of the long-term unemployed.

"They've been left behind," Spaulding says. "The message is that we've moved on, and we don't need you." ■

John A. Zukowski is a religion journalist based in Pennsylvania. His website is spiritualpopculture.com.

Provisions for the Long Haul

MANY CAREER COACHES and job market experts offer this advice:

Don't use online job boards as your main job search strategy. Networking and finding supportive organizations often are the game-changers for the long-term unemployed. Here are a few suggestions and resources:

■ THE 300 LIST

In early 2014, during a congressional squabble over extending unemployment benefits, the White House started a program for companies to voluntarily hire the long-term unemployed. About 300 companies signed on. Visit whitehouse.gov, and enter "For Recruiting and Hiring the Long-Term Unemployed" in the search box.

■ JOSEPH'S PEOPLE

This nonprofit ecumenical group with 14 chapters throughout Pennsylvania offers seminars and resources to assist the unemployed. Services are free. josephspeople.org



■ PLATFORM TO EMPLOYMENT

This successful public-private partnership started in Connecticut and has expanded to 10 major cities, including Chicago, Detroit, and San Francisco. The organization places workers into jobs and subsidizes their wages for eight weeks. After that trial period, the company has the option to hire the worker full time. platformtoemployment.com

■ POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

They are connected people. Send them a résumé and ask if they can help. Also, encourage them to provide funding for re-employment programs. To

find your representatives and their contact information, go to whoismyrepresentative.com for national representatives; openstates.org for state representatives.

■ RETRAINING PROGRAMS

The U.S. government funds some worker retraining programs for unemployed people who qualify. Funding is limited, though, and money is directed toward retraining in specific professions. Contact your local employment agency about funding and availability.

■ SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

Many now counsel the long-term unemployed and view the process of finding a job as a spiritual journey. Contact your local church or religious denomination office or visit sdiworld.org for a listing of spiritual directors who work with long-term unemployed clients. —JAZ

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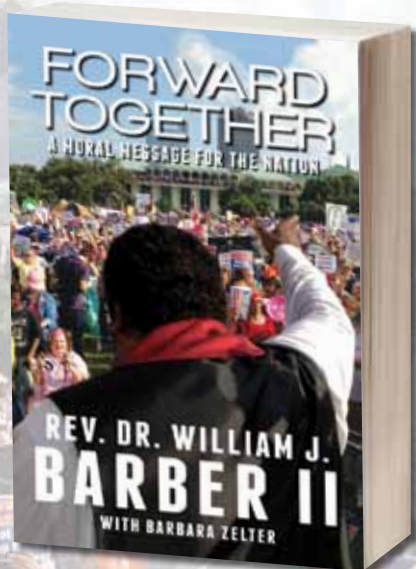
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Poetry

BY MARILYN SEVEN



Illustration by Gustaf Tenggren, 1923. Houghton Mifflin, Riverside Press

51.

Wizards! Caspar! Melchior! Balthasar!
Why fly straight to Fox Herod? Through
Unbounded night—! Bringing only news
Ripe for bloodletting. How black a star
You follow. Herod knows. How bizarre
A kingly claim. Will he oppose? Muse
Like Mary? Ha—! Mothers' sons lose
Heads to swords & axes. Herod bars
The throne to Jesus. Who kills first?
Herod orders. Dash 'em every one—!
Every male child under two years old.
God's son Jesus flees to Egypt. Thirst
For blood remains. Later he won't run.
Soldiers spear his side. So God behold.

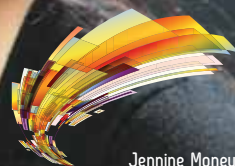
*Marilyn Seven is an artist living in New York City.
This sonnet is number 51 in an unpublished collec-
tion of 100.*

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By Jason Howard

You Gotta **Move**

Americana artist Parker Millsap spreads his “Truck Stop Gospel.”

INSIDE TOWN HALL, New York’s legendary concert venue, the dusty twang of a harmonica slices through the low din of the crowd filling the 1,500-seat auditorium. Most are likely here for the headliner, singer-songwriter Patty Griffin, who will take the stage after this, a performance by her opening act, Parker Millsap.

The bluesy riffs from Millsap’s harmonica are intense, long and wailing, before fading into the slow, dirty licks of a slide guitar. Then a voice, old and soulful, throbs through the room, crying out the first line of the old gospel standard “You Gotta Move” and shocking many in the audience, residents of a city where very little is shocking. You can see the wave of surprise move like a serpent across the room, with people turning to their companions, eyebrows raised and a whisper on their lips.

It’s the age that gets them—the man standing at center stage, flanked by two bandmates and looking like a rockabilly idol, with his gelled quiff and rolled-up shirt sleeves, isn’t the 60-year-old blues singer he sounds like. No, he is baby-faced, young—barely even 21—and yet he’s pulling this song from some secret, battered place inside him that’s far older than his years, and matching it with a sensual intensity that sizzles in the audience. By the time Millsap allows the last note from his

40 Paying to Play
Danny Duncan Collum
on children's sports

42 Smart Giving
Molly Marsh reviews
A Path Appears

43 Peaceful Revolution
Rosalie G. Riegler on *Pursuing
the Spiritual Roots of Protest*



**Singer-songwriter
Parker Millsap, left, and
at an earlier age.**

weathered voice to fade, he has commanded the undivided attention of one of the world's toughest crowds.

And they are raring for more.

Such a reception is not a surprise for this newcomer on the Americana music scene, whose self-titled album was released to critical buzz in February 2014. Since the album's release, Millsap has played on the same bill as artists including Griffin, Jason Isbell, and Old Crow Medicine Show; nabbed a nomination for Emerging Act of the Year from the Americana Music Association; and counted Rosanne Cash as one of his admirers.

Rooted in country, rock, and blues—and seasoned with a bit of fire and brimstone—*Parker Millsap* is a storyteller's album, with scenes from

**He's pulling this
song from some
secret, battered
place inside him
that's far older than
his years.**

Sunday mornings and Saturday nights, and a cast of characters that includes a Bible-selling trucker and a parking-lot prostitute ("Truck Stop Gospel"), meth cookers ("Quite Contrary"), and a man who's trying to live right but finds his salvation questioned ("When I Leave"). Millsap says the basis of these stories and characters is the place he was born and raised—and where he still insists on living: rural Oklahoma.

"When there's not a lot to do, you can find something you really want to do [and] just run with it," he explains of growing up in Purcell, population 5,952, in a conversation earlier in the day over coffee in Bryant Park. "I think there's just a tradition of boredom that breeds art, because what people do when they're bored is make things."

For Millsap, that came at age 5 with his first music composition, a song written for his kindergarten sweetheart.

Significantly, that was also the same year that his parents joined a Pentecostal church. "I remember the day that I came in the kitchen and all of the wine coolers and the beer and alcohol were all on the table. I still hadn't made the connection of what they all were, but I remember seeing them and asking my mom, 'What are you guys doing?' and she [was] like, 'We're getting rid of all of the alcohol in the house.'"

Although they adopted much of the legalism of their new faith, Millsap says his parents chose to overlook one widely

accepted rule in such conservative churches—banning secular music. At church on Sundays and Wednesdays, he heard fast and loud Pentecostal hymns played on piano, guitar, organ, drums, and tambourine; at home he was exposed to John

Continued on Page 41

New & Noteworthy

CALLING TO THE DEEP

In *Radical Spirituality: Repentance, Resistance, Revolution*, Jason Storbakken, co-founder with his wife, Vonetta, of the Radical Living Christian community in Brooklyn, N.Y., fluidly weaves scripture work with political critique and his own fascinating history in this call to find deeper life in Christ found on the margins. Orbis



GOD AND GRIT

Catholic Worker co-founder Dorothy Day is known for her activism, spirituality, and life among the poor. In *Dorothy Day for Armchair Theologians*, Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty, theology chair at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Ky., makes the case that Day was also a theologian—one with "street cred." Westminster John Knox Press

THE UNHEARD, HEARD

The documentary *Rich Hill* follows three boys living below the poverty line in Rich Hill, Mo., a gutted coal town. The boys treat the camera like a diary as they open up about family, sexual abuse, poverty, and a belief in a God who must "be busy with everyone else." www.richhillfilm.com



WORDS FORWARD

Andrew Belle's 2013 album *Black Bear* placed thoughtful lyrics behind keyboards and synth. The new *Black Bear (Hushed)* EP strips down some of those songs, spotlighting the metaphor-soaked narratives in "Sister," a creative retelling of the Prodigal Son, and "Dark Matter," which describes God as a haunting, omniscient black bear. iTunes exclusive

Paying to Play

AS LINUS ONCE pointed out, Charlie Brown could turn a wonderful thing like Christmas into a problem.

Well, America's post-industrial economy, in which the children of middle-class families frantically compete for slices of a shrinking pie, has done Charlie Brown one better: Our culture has managed to turn children's sports into a problem. More and more, the fun and games of bygone days are being displaced by a network of pay-to-play competitive club sports organizations—gated communities of the youth sports world that are marketed to middle-class parents as the only route to coveted college athletic scholarships.

Two sets of statistics tell the story. As of 2010, according to the *Columbus Dispatch*, youth sports organizations took in at least \$5 billion per year. In addition, according to a 2013 National Association of Sports Commissions study reported in the *Dallas Morning News*, the travel industry associated with youth



Getty Images

My first exposure to the world of club sports came a few years ago when our family adopted a 10-year-old boy from Ethiopia. Our new son had been playing soccer all his life—barefoot, on the streets, with a homemade ball fashioned from rags and twine. He seemed to have a knack for the game, so we wanted to at least give him a chance to play on a real team. At first he played in the local parks-and-recreation league. Then, one spring, we moved him up to the county-sponsored “travel” team. After that, we asked the coach whether he thought our son had the stuff to go somewhere with soccer, perhaps to someday even play at the college level? “It’s possible,” the coach said. “But if that’s what he wants, he’ll have to play year-round.”

That’s when I learned that parents were paying hundreds or even thousands of dollars in club fees and travel expenses to have their kids compete only with others who are similarly dedicated. We didn’t go there—we don’t have the money or the time. But I suddenly understood why the best players on our boys’ Little League or school sports teams, for instance, were also playing for some other team to which they gave priority.

According to a *Dallas Morning News* series on club sports, some competitive clubs are even starting to prohibit their members from playing on their school teams. They can do this because, in all sports except U.S. football, college recruiters often don’t bother with school teams. Instead, they do all their recruiting at club tournaments where the kids have been intensively coached since the age of 8 or 10.

College is the goal here. These are not low-income kids or parents, nurturing hoop dreams of NBA riches. The goal is twofold: demonstrating a level of achievement and commitment that will make a college application stand out from the pack and getting some athletic scholarship money to round out the financial aid package.

That may seem like a terrible way for a kid to spend his or her childhood, and it is. But it’s also hard not to sympathize with the parents who know how hard it will be for the next generation to remain middle class in an economy of declining wages and stagnant social mobility. ■



Danny Duncan Collum teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort. He is the author of the novel *White Boy*.

Our culture has managed to turn children's sports into an expensive “gated community” for the elite.

sports is worth another \$7 billion a year. And all that money is being spent on fewer kids. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, participation of kids age 6 to 17 in the most popular U.S. team sports fell by about 4 percent between 2008 and 2012 while the population of 6-to-17-year-olds fell by only 0.6 percent.

Competitive youth sports is becoming an elite phenomenon. Kids whose families can afford it spend the year migrating from tournaments to training camps. Meanwhile, the majority of kids just give up and stay home to play video games.

Continued from Page 39

Hiatt, Taj Mahal, and Ry Cooder. “Getting all of those types of music was good because—intellectually I didn’t put this together until later—but I think early on I realized they were all connected in a very real way ... [that] it all comes from the same place within.”

By the time he was 9, Millsap was learning guitar, taking lessons and sitting next to the guitar player at church, “watching his hands,” before starting to play during services himself. At 14 he joined a blues-rock band with his friend Michael Rose—who plays bass for him now—covering songs by Jimi Hendrix and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. But Millsap wasn’t satisfied, and soon he began trying his hand at originals, a process that coincided with his beginning to question the strict conservative doctrine that he heard preached three times a week and had taken “all to heart ... as deep as I could.”

It all started on a mission trip to Utah to convert Mormons. “We had [a] flight, and so I went to the library,” he recalls. “I was going through the books and saw a [Kurt] Vonnegut cover and said, ‘Ah, that looks interesting,’ and I was on the plane headed to this mission trip reading Vonnegut.”

Millsap gets tickled at the absurdity of reading *Breakfast of Champions* and preparing to proselytize. “Cognitive dissonance was in full effect, because I started understanding what [Vonnegut] was saying [about thinking for yourself]. By the time I got through the book, my perspective shifted: ‘Oh, there’s this whole other side of everything that I’m not seeing.’”

And then he read a novel that was a bit closer to home—John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, about a poor family forced to leave Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl. “It kind of all came to a head,” he says of his separating from fundamentalism and pursuing his vocation. Instead of going to college, he interned for a few months at a recording studio in California, wrapping equipment cables, making coffee, and watching—just like he had in church—an engineer who had recorded Tom Waits. He returned to Oklahoma with some experience, living over his parents’ garage, working for his aunt to have gas money, writing lots of songs, and beginning to play live in bars and clubs.

Like Steinbeck, he found he didn’t have to look that far for material, discovering his



A CULTURE WAR MISFIRE

LEFT BEHIND may be a soft target, but once seen, you may realize that it’s a soft target for anyone who has ever been on an airplane, seen what Nicolas Cage is capable of in *Leaving Las Vegas*, met a Muslim, or not been cryogenically frozen since the era when it was socially acceptable to treat people with dwarfism as punchlines.

It really is worse than most theatrically released movies—shot and edited like a political attack ad/music video mashup, written like a child’s Sunday school lesson, and then strangely denuded of almost anything that would make it identifiably Christian (teasing those who already believe, yet scared of alienating people who just want to see a cheesy disaster movie without heavy proselytization).

The people who made it aren’t bad people, of course. (I’m not sure anyone is, with the line between good and evil running through each human heart and all—although that’s another argument that wouldn’t make it into this film.) The producers are ideologically committed to advancing a message that they were indoctrinated into by an unthinking system—let’s call it the Christian Industrial Entertainment Complex. They’ve stumbled upon the money and basic skill to make movies. They think that what they’re doing is changing the world for the better, but that’s doubtful—it’s more likely just reinforcing the closed-set worldview of the CIEC’s pre-committed adherents.

This isn’t new, so I’m not too concerned about one more example of bad art masquerading as religious experience.

What’s more interesting to me is that *Left Behind* was not the box office success that had been predicted. For a film based on one of the best-selling novels in history, its theatrical performance was surprisingly poor. The public conversation about spirituality in the United States is certainly no longer monopolized nor even dominated by the dictates of the Religious Right; the marketplace of ideas is open for exchange, even in Hollywood.

So in the spirit of lighting a candle rather than cursing the darkness, instead of denouncing *Left Behind*, let’s replace it with something else. If you want to explore eschatology, try **The Fountain** (in which a man discovers that living in the future only harms the present). If you seek Nicolas Cage’s redemption, then see **Adaptation**, **Raising Arizona**, or **Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans**. If you want transcendence, **Andrei Rublev** remains the culmination of what cinema has to offer. Forget *Left Behind*. I think the culture wars may be over. So perhaps we can stop fighting them, and embrace beauty and truth kissing each other—in cinema as much as anywhere. ■

Gareth Higgins is a northern Irish writer living in North Carolina. He co-presents thefilmtalk.com and soulelegram.com.

songs were immersed in the themes of sin and redemption that he had heard his whole life and had created what he refers to as a “guilty conscience ... I will never get over.”

“A lot of the characters [in my songs] are like little bits and pieces of different people that I’ve met and know, and [I] just stack them up,” he explains. “None of them are about this specific person ... but they are pieces [that] I kind of conglomerate into this character.”

Millsap writes from a place of no judgment, a technique that allows for a complex narrative to develop about rural life, one in which a man can pin all his hopes on a lottery ticket, as in the heartbreaking “Yosemite”; in which a man can turn his back on his small town in “Disappear”; and in which a sinner confesses to his “shadows in hiding” in the poignant “Forgive Me.”

His songs, Millsap confesses, often leave people guessing about his intentions toward the brand of religion with which he grew up—a fact he relishes. “I love it. I’m just telling a story. It’s up to you to figure out. There are definitely parts ... that were written from a more sincere point of view, and there are other parts [that] I tweaked ... to be a little bit outlandish.” If he has a message, he says, it’s one that hearkens back to Steinbeck’s portrayal of rural America: “These ‘little’ people are not so little. They’re these little people working these miniscule jobs, [but] their lives are just as important as yours.”

Like the rest of Millsap’s rapidly expanding fan base, the audience at Town Hall gets this message loud and clear. They listen in rapt attention as he croons “The Villain,” a tender ballad about refusing to be the bad guy in a relationship. They cheer him wildly for his newly written song “Heaven Sent,” told from the perspective of a gay son writing a coming-out letter to his conservative preacher father. And when he sings his closer, the rollicking “Truck Stop Gospel,” throwing his voice up to the roof, they give him a standing ovation so loud it sounds like it could be heard all the way back home in Oklahoma. ■

Jason Howard is the author of *A Few Honest Words: The Kentucky Roots of Popular Music* and co-author of *Something’s Rising: Appalachians Fighting Mountaintop Removal*. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *Paste*, and on *NPR*.

Reviewed by Molly Marsh

GOOD NEWS ABOUT SMART GIVING

***A Path Appears: Transforming Lives, Creating Opportunity*, by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. Knopf.**

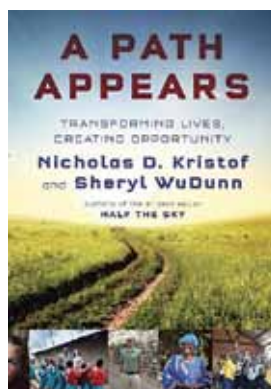
IT’S EASY to lose heart when tackling the painful challenges we live with—poverty, racism, violence, sex trafficking. We volunteer and donate our time and money, but do those efforts really make a difference?

Nicholas D. Kristof, a *New York Times* columnist, and Sheryl WuDunn, a former *Times* reporter who works in finance, had the same question; *A Path Appears* is the result of their investigation. The husband-and-wife team canvassed the giving world, interviewing socially minded people working as individuals or in community with nonprofits, corporations, for-profit organizations, and everything in between. Turns out millions of lives are being transformed next door and across the globe—including our own.

Bernard Glassman, for example, is an aeronautical engineer who wanted to do something about homelessness. After researching the issue for six months, he decided jobs were the most urgent need and started Greyston Bakery in Yonkers, N.Y., a for-profit company whose mission is to employ homeless men and women.

Danone, a large food company that includes brands such as Dannon and Stonyfield, worked with Grameen Bank founder Muhammad Yunus to develop a yogurt that would reduce malnutrition among Bangladeshi children. The endeavor also provided jobs for women who sold the yogurt. The project experienced multiple setbacks but also successes—because all the players sought creative solutions to malnutrition and were willing to test them.

This latter point reflects a growing trend Kristof and WuDunn see among charities



We volunteer and donate our time and money, but do those efforts really make a difference?

and nonprofits—relying on evidence rather than intuition for what works and what doesn’t. “Every aid group in the history of the world has claimed that its interventions are cost effective,” they write, but those evaluations are often “as rigorous as those of grandparents evaluating their grandchildren.”

They cite the work of researchers such as Esther Duflo, an economist who heads the Poverty Action Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She and her colleagues are developing tools to measure impact and cost effectiveness and using them to evaluate everything from clean cookstoves to microfinance projects. Organizations such as Evidence Action and the Coalition for Evidence-

Based Policy help further this work by highlighting or investing in programs whose effectiveness has been proven in randomized control trials.

“If it’s important for businesses to be meticulous in planning a new business line,” Kristof and WuDunn write, “it’s even more critical for an aid organization or donor to rely on careful evidence to plan the best way to fight malaria or educate children.”

The authors also look at the science behind why giving is good for us, interviewing neuroscientists Ulrich Mayr and William T. Harbaugh about what happens in the brain when we donate to a good cause. Other research points to the physical benefits of giving—lower blood pressure, improved physical and mental health—as well as the emotional benefits. Giving can be a source of joy.

“[T]o help others isn’t a heroic burden

but a transcendent source of fulfillment in our busy, often materialistic lives,” Kristof and WuDunn write. “There are few more selfish pleasures than altruism.”

The book ends with concrete suggestions for plunging in—find an issue and research it, volunteer, get involved—and then more specific actions readers can take in 10 minutes. Those are followed by a list of gifts people can make in someone’s name and, finally, a set of organizations the authors find effective, including those they

discuss in the book.

Kristof and WuDunn are honest about the challenges—poverty is complex, and helping people is harder than it looks. There is no single way to solve these problems. But incremental progress works—in fact, that’s how most change happens. ■

Molly Marsh is managing editor at Partners In Health, an organization that works to improve the health of poor and marginalized people around the world.

Reviewed by Rosalie G. Riegler

INCUBATING PEACEFUL REVOLUTION

***Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest: Merton, Berrigan, Yoder, and Muste at the Gethsemani Abbey Peacemakers Retreat*, by Gordon Oyer. Cascade Books.**

IN NOVEMBER 1964, as the long Cold War heated up again, this time in Vietnam, Trappist monk Thomas Merton set forth a koan to 14 peacemakers: “By what right do Christians protest?” For three days, these activists and theologians—famously uniting Catholic and Protestant faith traditions—met with Merton in the Kentucky hills, grappling with how and why Christians should resist the violence of war.

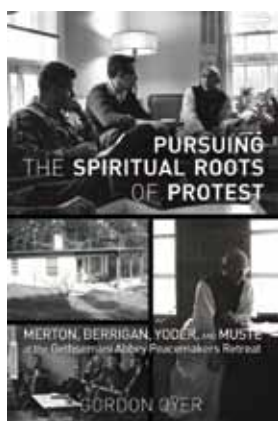
Historian Gordon Oyer has re-created this meeting so pivotal to the peace movement and—most important—assessed its meaning for our time. The historic retreat is meticulously sourced with detailed textual analysis of the presenters at the retreat and the writers who influenced them. Particularly impressive is the lucid summary of the era and the delicacy and respect with which the author treats cultural and doctrinal differences among the participants.

Ecumenism in peace work is thankfully common today, but in the early ’60s the blending of faith traditions at the retreat was groundbreaking. Even more revolutionary were the two Masses the group celebrated

together, with Jesuit priest Dan Berrigan presiding, everyone in the group receiving communion, and John Howard Yoder, a Mennonite theologian, preaching at the second liturgy. (Both practices were proscribed at the time.)

Attendees included Phil Berrigan, later one of the creators of the Plowshares actions for nuclear disarmament, and A.J. Muste, dean of the U.S. peace movement at the time, with years of experience in War Resisters League, the Committee for Nonviolent Action, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). FOR’s Paul Peachey and John Heidbrink were instrumental in initiating and organizing the retreat, although neither of them could attend in the end. (Neither could two other invitees—Bayard Rustin and Martin Luther King Jr.)

The retreat forged ties between the mainly Protestant FOR and the growing Catholic peace movement. By the end of the year, the Catholic Peace Fellowship had opened an office in Manhattan, under the auspices of FOR, where Catholic Workers Jim Forest and Tom Cornell, both present at the retreat, organized



The spiritual roots of protest lie in the life and teaching of the incarnate Jesus.



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against the Vietnam War and counseled men opposed to the draft.

Merton introduced the group to the writings of the French monk Louis Massignon, pointing out that monks fled to the desert to resist the Constantinian marriage of church and state, and so are forever in protest by their very being. He also explicated Jacques Ellul's critique of technology, which became a retreat touchstone. Dan Berrigan meditated on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and his concept of a humanity evolving toward God. Yoder's closing session provided a beacon that continues to guide peaceworkers: The spiritual roots of protest lie in the life and teaching of the incarnate Jesus, who counsels us to resist the principalities and powers of the privileged as he did.

In a compelling epilogue, Oyer ties all this together by asking four contemporary peacemakers to ponder the relevance of the retreat for today's troubled world.



Jim Forest, left, and Dan Berrigan, center, in 1972, the day of Berrigan's release from Danbury prison.

Theologian Ched Myers, Catholic Worker farmer and scholar Jake Olzen, Elizabeth McAlister of Jonah House (widow of Phil Berrigan), and retired Episcopal bishop George Packard comment cogently on several questions posed during the retreat discussions.

All reaffirm a continuing spiritual practice and a resistance culture grounded in community, particularly community with

the marginalized, a concept stressed in the retreat. And Yoder's simple conclusion that our roots are in the nonviolent Jesus has become the unifying standard for all faith-based resistance, so much so that we now take Christian ecumenism for granted and look to work with Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist believers.

Oyer writes, "We as a society and a species are nearing the edge of a cliff at warp speed." We each need to pursue the spiritual roots of

protest in this book so we may better resist the culture that threatens to push us off the cliff. ■

*Rosalie G. Riegle is a retired professor of English and an oral historian. Her latest books are *Doing Time for Peace: Resistance, Family, and Community* and *Crossing the Line: Nonviolent Resisters Speak Out for Peace*.*

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Author Tim Muehlhoff says relationship and honesty are necessary for progress to be made.



Reviewed by Christine A. Scheller

DISARMING OUR **SPEECH**

I Beg to Differ: Navigating Difficult Conversations With Truth and Love, by Tim Muehlhoff. IVP Books.

POLICE BRUTALITY, the Affordable Care Act, climate change: When people with differing convictions on issues such as these come together for conversation, some prefer to first set aside the issues and focus on building relationships, while others want disagreements front and center. In his book *I Beg to Differ: Navigating Difficult Conversations With Truth and Love*, Biola University communications professor Tim Muehlhoff says relationship and honesty are necessary for progress to be made.

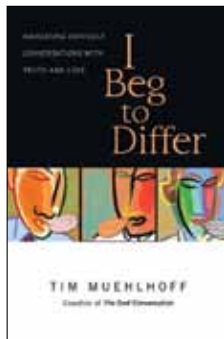
"If every conversation we have with others is about the issues that divide us, the intensity will hurt the communication climate," he writes.

For example, he offers the hypothetical story of an evangelical Christian who wants to share his faith with a Muslim co-worker. Over lunch, the colleagues take time to learn about each other's differing religious convictions, but the conversation doesn't invade their work relationship. Back at the office, they return to their easygoing, day-to-day relational habits.

It's a mistake to begin conversations by trying to convince others of our position, Muehlhoff says. It is better to listen with a

sincere desire to understand what the other person believes and why they believe it.

"Position-centered individuals view others as a collective whole based on gender, race, education level, social position, political affiliation, religion, and so on. Individuals are grouped into large, often stereotypical categories and are treated accordingly," Muehlhoff writes.



Person-centered communication views those with whom we disagree as "unrepeatable souls created by God."

As we approach differences, he advises that we ask ourselves: "Are we relating to a person or someone's analysis of them? Do we allow individuals the freedom of self-definition? Have we boxed people in according to stereotype? How much of my communication is shaped by pre-judgment?"

Muehlhoff describes himself and most of his students as conservative Christians. In his advanced rhetoric class, he has assigned them the task of watching Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* documentary and finding areas of agreement with the politically liberal filmmaker. When students have complained that they can't find one area of agreement with Moore, Muehlhoff has guided them to

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areas of common ground, such as the belief that “what makes our country special is the freedom to critique a president.”

Once common ground is established, wisdom is necessary in determining how to proceed, he says. Many of us get stuck here, because we don't want to jeopardize fragile relationships. But it is a mistake to consistently avoid difficult issues. “Honesty communicates trust. If the time never seems right to address honest disagreements, then we have fallen into this common mistake” and our conflicts will remain unresolved, Muehlhoff writes.

Muehlhoff suggests asking ourselves the following question once we have taken sufficient time to establish a foundation of

Person-centered communication views those with whom we disagree as “unrepeatable souls created by God.”

common ground and trust: “With this person, at this time, under these circumstances, what is the next thing I should say?”

If we do nothing beyond listening with a sincere desire to understand our opponents and ask ourselves this question, it's possible we'll get farther than by pushing our own position too hard. In our rush to convince others that we're right and they're wrong about issues, we too often run roughshod over relationships that could be vital to creating lasting change on issues about which we are passionate.

I Beg to Differ is an excellent resource with helpful chapter summaries for easily bookmarking the many communication strategies it presents. The book would have benefitted from examples that appeal to a more politically and theologically diverse audience, but overcoming that weakness may be a place for readers to start putting their listening skills to work. ■

Christine A. Scheller is a widely published journalist and essayist. She lives at the Jersey shore and in Washington, D.C., where she helps facilitate dialogue between scientific and religious communities.

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To the Millennia and Beyond!

I CONFESS THAT I DO NOT often use the Revised Common Lectionary. As a Bible professor, I prefer to read texts in their larger literary and historical contexts. When a brief reading from one time period is lifted out of its context and juxtaposed with another written many centuries later, it can feel like an invisible hand is forcing me to compare apples and oranges—or even apples and mushrooms.

Nevertheless, I have been enriched by this year's readings for Advent and Christmas. My "larger historical context" has become the sweep of a thousand years of Israelite history, from King David to the birth of the "son of David."

For Christians, the coming of Jesus was a singularity. Though we focus on his birth in this season, that lower-class event was barely noticed at the time, and it is not mentioned by two of our gospel writers. It is his entire life, ministry, death, and resurrection that echoes throughout the ages and ushers in our hope of salvation. Our prophets and psalmists from the Hebrew Bible could not foresee details of the Christ-event from their perspectives centuries earlier. Yet their intuitions and hints and poetic expressions of joy over God's in-breaking from their times are now borrowed to give voice to our exultation over Jesus' coming today.

In a culture measured by quarterly profits and immediate gratification by credit card, we need a longer view to better understand what God is doing throughout human history. These Advent readings call us beyond the present to the millennia of the past and the hope of the future stretching to eternity.



Reta Halteman Finger, co-author of Creating a Scene in Corinth: A Simulation, taught Bible at Messiah College in Grantham, Pa., and writes a Bible study blog at www.eewc.com/Retas.

[DECEMBER 7]

Comfort Ye, My People

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

PSALM 85 is a prayer from those who now live in ordinary times—when God may seem absent and we may become cynical—but who remember those past mountain-top experiences. The missing stanzas of verses 4 to 7 plead for God not to "be angry with us forever" but to "show us your steadfast love."

The other texts announce good news and provide comfort for those who have not had any in a long time. Isaiah 40 exudes comfort and excitement. Israel's fortunes are changing! Yahweh will care for them as a shepherd with his sheep. But a 150-year-long silence lies between chapters 39 and 40. The 8th century B.C.E. prophet warns King Hezekiah that after his lifetime Jerusalem will lose everything and his sons will be castrated and carried to Babylon (39:5-8). But that was then. Right now Yahweh is working through the Persian ruler Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1) to bring

God's people home to Zion! By 539 B.C.E., a "Second Isaiah" offers comfort and hope for the end of exile.

Mark 1:1-8 announces good news by weaving together lines from Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3. "In the wilderness" John the water-baptizer announces the coming of one who "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (verse 8). But this divine intrusion follows 450 years when Israel lives without any prophetic witness to God's presence, often under foreign domination.

Decades later, 2 Peter 3:8-15 addresses believers who wait for Jesus' final return that never seems to come. Hang on—God's timing is different than ours, but "the Day of the Lord will come!" (verse 10).

Advent symbolizes the end of God's absence and the period of expectant waiting in hope. It is like C.S. Lewis' land of Narnia, where melting snow signals that Aslan is on the move.

[DECEMBER 14]

Christmas Justice

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126;
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

IF YOU KNOW anything about Luke's gospel, you know Isaiah 61—or at least the beginning lines. In Luke, Jesus stands up to read it in his synagogue, making Isaiah's good news for the poor Jesus' platform for ministry. That he includes non-Jews in this social reversal is clear by his following commentary on the widow of Sidon and Namaan the Syrian. But this was so offensive to his listeners that they drove him out of town.

The original racial-economic context of this majestic poem seems quite similar. Scholars generally agree that Isaiah 56 to 66 reflects yet another period in Israel's life. If Second Isaiah (chapters 40 to 55) represents the hope and thrill of returning from exile, then Third Isaiah writes during the years that follow the return. Starting over is not easy. For one thing, the elite Jews from Babylon do not return to an empty land. Many Israelites have remained and, without temple and law, have assimilated with other ethnic peoples in the area. So who is in charge? And how do we deal with syncretism?

It is the priest Ezra who brings Torah to the people and calls for breaking up inter-racial, inter-religious marriages in order to maintain Hebrew purity laws. In contrast, Third Isaiah, according to Walter Brueggemann's commentary, argues the opposite: Yahweh's covenant with Israel is inclusive of all nations and focuses on "neighborly needs." It is this perspective that Jesus embraces—and that infuriates those who draw boundaries and claim special status.

The third context is today's America, where some would keep out refugee children, where the "justice" system is biased, and where wealth inequality has grown to staggering proportions. If you stood in your church this Advent, read the Isaiah text, and challenged the audience to refuse to buy any Christmas gifts from corporations that underpaid their workers, what do you think the reaction would be?

[DECEMBER 21]

Kings and Royal Cities

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26;
Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

IF WE WERE British subjects, these readings would make more sense. The royal House of Windsor can trace its lineage back to the Holy Roman Empire. American citizens have no such tradition.

Three of our four readings name King David as the originator of a dynasty that Yahweh established and would maintain forever. This is promised to David himself through the prophet Nathan. The full reading of 2 Samuel 7:1-16 contains a clever word-play, where a literal “house” is what David wants to build for the Lord. But according to Nathan’s dream, Yahweh does not need such a house. Rather, “the Lord will make you a house” (7:11) from your offspring, so that “your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever” (7:16). Psalm 89 confirms this covenant in majestic poetry.

Whatever “forever” meant, the reality was quite different. Hezekiah’s sons cannot procreate. For centuries no Davidic king rules in Israel, as the Judeans suffer under occupation by one foreign empire after another. Even a century of independence does not bring David’s dynasty to the throne.

It was critical, then, for the authors of our New Testament to identify Jesus as the final fulfillment of God’s promise to David. Even so, there are mixed messages. Some scholars doubt that “Jesus of Nazareth” was actually born in Bethlehem, City of David. Although the angel Gabriel promises Mary that “the Lord God will give to [her son] the throne of his ancestor David” (Luke 1:32), a virginal conception does not biologically connect him to “Joseph, of the house of David” (verse 27).

Perhaps Paul got it right in his letter to the Romans. Although Jesus was somehow “descended from David according to the flesh” (1:3), the real revelation of this mystery is much more comprehensive and pervades *all* the prophetic writings (see 16:25-27). It is the good news that the message of grace is not only for Jews but also “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles” (1:5).

[DECEMBER 28]

Odes to Joy

Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3; Psalm 148;
Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

THE TIME OF expectant waiting is over. The child has been born. Though the event was noticed only by poor and insignificant people at the time, with hindsight we now recognize its singularity. Set in this context, Psalm 148 calls all created things—from angels to the solar system, from animals and plants to men and women—to dance and sing before the Lord in a paroxysm of delight. The poetry of Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3 echoes this joy. We celebrate that moment in history when “God sent his Son, born of a woman ... so that we might

As in C.S. Lewis’ Narnia,
in Advent Aslan is on
the move.

receive adoption as children” (Galatians 4:4-6). It is the still point of the turning world.

In Luke’s text, we shift to Jerusalem. The baby’s parents are law-abiding Jews, so 40 days after the birth they climb Mount Zion to dedicate him in the temple and offer their sacrifice. But more meaningful are the persons they meet. Both Simeon and Anna are old; it is as if their lives have been divinely extended in order to witness this moment and this child before they die.

Holding the baby, Simeon quotes from Second Isaiah: The child will be “a light for revelation to the nations and for glory to your people Israel” (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). Though Luke quotes Simeon’s prophecy, we know more about Anna, also a prophet. She is from the tribe of Asher, one of the 10 lost tribes—which hints at Luke’s inclusive agenda of Jesus restoring all of Israel as well as bringing light to the nations. A fixture in the temple, Anna recognizes many who come to worship. She speaks “about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38).

What can we as believers do to carry on Jesus’ living hope? ■

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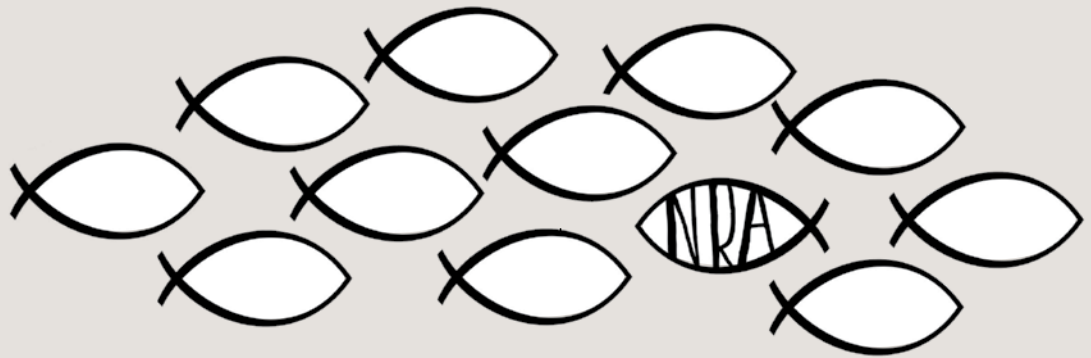
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How Would Jesus Vote?

WITH THE CRUCIAL midterm elections less than a fortnight past, many Americans are wondering what “fortnight” means, because it sounds really cool on *Downton Abbey*. Well, it means two weeks, and that’s hardly enough time to develop the regret appropriate to the choices you made at the polls.

But why wait for that inevitable sinking feeling about your latest destructive act against democracy? Let’s get a jump start on your anxi-

survey guy calls us at dinner time.)

This particular survey was conducted by YouGov, one of those preposterous internet names that are slowly eroding the English language and corrupting the speech of our young people. Kids these days can’t seem to use regular words when communicating, much less registering emotion. Instead of expressing the tried and true “*criminally!*” when frustrated, they default to “omg,” which I won’t translate. This is a religious magazine, after all, and using lower case letters when you take the Lord’s name in vain doesn’t let you off the hook. Another of their favorites is “wtf,” but that one’s okay since it means “why the frown.” Right? But I digress.

ACCORDING TO those who participated in the poll, Jesus would be reassuringly predictable on the issues of capital punishment and the environment. Respondents believed Jesus would be against the former and concerned about the latter. Fifty-five percent of respondents also stated that Jesus would support universal healthcare. So far so good.

But then came gun control. That’s when Jesus let me down.

Only 46 percent of Americans thought Jesus would support stricter gun laws, notwithstanding the Sixth Commandment. That’s the one that says “Thou shalt not kill,” which probably sounded more forceful in

the original Greek, before the native tongue of King James made it sound equivalent to forbidding use of the wrong salad fork at dinner. (I always get the bent one.)

Those responding to the poll obviously missed the moral clarity spelled out in every version of the New Testament I’ve ever read. (Although I haven’t gotten that new NRAV—National Rifle Association Version—which contains helpful revisions. “Turn the other cheek,” for example, now refers to pressing the rifle stock to the other side of the face, if you’re left-handed.)

So it begs the question whether Jesus was sufficiently clear when he droned on about loving your neighbor as yourself. Maybe if it was called the Magnum Rule—instead of the Golden Rule—it might have packed more punch.

These same respondents were also unclear about Jesus’ teachings on wealth, since only 47 percent of people making over \$100,000 think he would be for raising their taxes. These are the Americans who cling to the idea that although Jesus wore a simple robe, it probably had a high thread count.

No doubt these folks have been busy measuring their camels for the end of the fiscal year, and are adjusting their needles accordingly.

Turns out, the camels fit through just fine. ■

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of Sojourners.

The people have spoken, usually during dinnertime.

ety by reading through a recent poll asking Americans how Jesus would weigh in on issues of the day.

Let the disappointment begin.

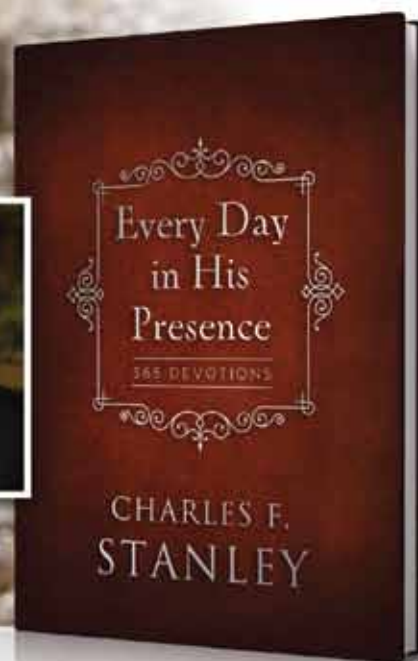
As a devout Christian—you can put down your American flag, we know who you are—you regularly ask yourself, “What would Jesus do?” And who better to advise you than Jesus himself, or the best representation of God’s son that modern technology can provide: the telephone survey.

You know, that thing that happens when you’ve just sat down to eat dinner after already getting up twice, once for the cracked pepper you forgot and again to replace the bent fork that you always seem to end up with. Then you finally start to say grace AND THE DARN PHONE RINGS!! (Jesus calls us to follow him. The

Ken Davis

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